

INDIA-AUSTRALIA DEFENCE COOPERATION

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India and Australia have had a long-standing defence relationship, with both nations recognising the importance of cooperation in the field of defence and security. In recent years, the relationship has grown stronger, with both countries recognising the increasing strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific region and the need to work together to promote regional security and stability. India and Australia are among the QUAD countries, which is an informal strategic dialogue between the United States, Japan, Australia and India, which mainly focuses on security and economic issues in the Indo-Pacific Ocean region, and this partnership could add more depth and substance to the defence cooperation of these countries.

A key element of the defence cooperation between India and Australia is the annual India-Australia Defence Ministers' Dialogue, which is held alternately in the two countries. This dialogue provides an opportunity for the defence ministers of the two countries to discuss a wide range of issues related to defence and security and to explore ways to further strengthen the defence partnership between the two countries. This is the arrangement under the "Framework for

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Security Cooperation between India and Australia”¹ agreed upon in November 2014.

The joint military exercises that are regularly conducted between the two countries is another important aspect of the defence cooperation between them. These exercises are aimed at promoting interoperability and cooperation between the two countries’ armed forces, and have included a range of activities, such as joint training in counterterrorism and counter-insurgency operations, and naval exercises in the Indian Ocean.

In addition, India and Australia are also working to strengthen their maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, with the two countries signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of maritime security in 2006, 2009, 2014 and in 2020.² This MoU provides a framework for cooperation on issues such as maritime domain awareness, counter-piracy and illegal fishing, and humanitarian and disaster relief operations. All these efforts indicate that the defence cooperation between India and Australia will continue to strengthen in the years to come.

The 2+2 dialogue between India and Australia is a crucial platform for the two nations to enhance their strategic partnership and address a range of security and defence issues. The dialogue, which involves meetings between the foreign and defence ministers of both countries, has been instrumental in strengthening cooperation on a variety of fronts, including counterterrorism, maritime security and defence trade. The first India-Australia 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue was held in New Delhi in September 2021.³ This platform has also helped to build trust and deepen understanding of key regional and global issues between the two nations. Despite

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1. Press Information Bureau, “Framework for Security Cooperation between India and Australia”, Government of India, November 1, 2014, at <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=111501>. Accessed on January 10, 2023.
 2. Lalit Kapur, “India and Australia: Partners for Indo-Pacific Security and Stability”, DPG Policy Brief, December 15, 2020, at <https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/publication/policy-briefs/india-and-australia-partners-for-indo-pacific-security-and-stability.html>. Accessed on January 11, 2023.
 3. Press Release, “Joint Statement on Inaugural India-Australia 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue”, Australian Government Defence, September 11, 2021, at <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/statements/2021-09-11/joint-statement-inaugural-india-australia-22-ministerial-dialogue>. Accessed on January 11, 2023.

some challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the changing global political landscape, the 2+2 dialogue between India and Australia is expected to continue to play a vital role in shaping bilateral relations in the future. The next 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue will be held later this year.

STRATEGIC MILITARY COLLABORATION

India-Australia Military Collaboration

India and Australia have many shared interests and a lot to gain from increased military cooperation. Collaboration between the two countries in the form of joint military exercises, training, procurement and maintenance of equipment, research and technology sharing and many other forms would help India and Australia to address regional security challenges and maintain stability in the Indo-Pacific region, and strengthen their bilateral relationship. This cooperation can further help India to secure its interests in the region and to face any challenges to its security and sovereignty in the region.

India and Australia share a common interest in promoting stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region. The region has been of vital importance for both countries as it is home to the busiest shipping lanes, critical sea lines of communication, and large deposits of natural resources. A stable and secure Indo-Pacific region is essential for the economic prosperity and security of both countries, as well as for the global economy. By working together, India and Australia can take steps to address regional security challenges such as terrorism, piracy, and regional tensions and promote regional stability and security.

Working together on military exercises, joint training, and other forms of military cooperation, the two countries can increase their ability to work together effectively in the event of a crisis. This also helps to build mutual trust and understanding between the two militaries, and to establish a working relationship that would be beneficial in future crises and scenarios with interoperability as a binding factor. India and Australia can tremendously benefit from increased cooperation in terms of procurement and maintenance of military equipment. The two countries can increase the efficiency

and effectiveness of their respective militaries, and also develop new economic opportunities for businesses in both countries. This can help to enhance the self-reliance and indigenisation of the Indian defence industry.

Most importantly, India and Australia share a common concern about China's increasing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region. Both countries have expressed concerns over China's territorial claims in the South China Sea and its increasing military presence in the region. By collaborating militarily, India and Australia can work together to deter any potential aggression from China and maintain stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Military Investment in the IOR

The Indian Ocean Region has long been of strategic importance to both India and Australia, and both countries have a vested interest in ensuring the stability and security of the region. There are a number of reasons why India and Australia should invest more militarily in the Indian Ocean. The region is of immense economic and security significance to both countries, and a stable and secure Indian Ocean is essential for the prosperity and security of both India and Australia, as well as for the global economy as a whole. The Indian Ocean is a vast water body that holds enormous importance for fishing, shipping and oil and gas resources. Both countries share a concern about the rising military assertiveness of China in the region. By investing more militarily in the Indian Ocean, India and Australia can enhance their ability to respond to security threats, promote regional stability, and protect their economic and strategic interests as per the rules-based requirements. It can also serve as a confidence building measure between India and Australia, as well as among the other countries in the region, allowing the countries to work together in a coordinated and cohesive manner.

DEFENCE INDUSTRY COLLABORATION

Bilateral Procurement and Exchange of Defence Equipment

Increased defence trade, co-production and co-development, exchange of technical and industry delegations, and the

implementation of defence offset policies, are some of the ways that India and Australia can increase bilateral procurement and exchange of defence equipment. These measures can strengthen the defence partnership between the two countries and enhance their ability to promote regional security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

In recent years, the two countries have identified the defence industry as a key area for cooperation, and have been working to explore ways to increase collaboration in this field. Both countries, by increasing trade in defence equipment, can create opportunities for their defence industries, while also ensuring that their armed forces have access to the latest technologies and equipment. Bilateral defence industry collaboration agreements can be signed to facilitate this, which would open up more opportunities for joint ventures, technology transfer and exchange of defence-related information. This can be done through the establishment of a joint defence research and development fund which could support joint research and development projects. The increased cooperation in various defence technologies can be effected between the Defence Research & Development Organisation of India and the Defence Science & Technology Group of Australia.⁴

India and Australia can also explore opportunities for collaboration in defence industries and technology, such as developing joint projects, sharing knowledge and expertise and creating supply chains. This can include working together to develop new technologies and weapons systems, such as radar and missile defence systems, air-to-air missiles, electronic warfare systems and stealth technology, which will help to enhance the Indian Armed Forces' capabilities and will also foster economic opportunities for businesses in both countries.

Co-production and co-development of defence equipment is another way that India and Australia can increase bilateral procurement and exchange of defence equipment. This can include cooperation in the production of military hardware as well as collaboration in the development of advanced defence technologies

4. Press Release, n. 3.

such as unmanned systems and missile defence systems. By working together on co-production and co-development projects, both countries can share expertise and resources and also ensure that the equipment produced meets the requirements of both countries.

The exchange of technical and industry delegations between India and Australia is another way to increase bilateral procurement and exchange of defence equipment. This would provide an opportunity for industry experts and government officials to learn about each other's defence requirements and capabilities, and could open up opportunities for joint ventures and collaboration in areas such as joint research and development, as well as co-production and co-development of defence equipment.

In line with Atmanirbharta mission, another approach to increase bilateral procurement and exchange of defence equipment is by implementing Defence Offset Policies, which require foreign companies to invest a portion of the defence contract value in the domestic defence industry of the procuring country. This would create new opportunities for collaboration between India and Australia's defence industries, while also promoting the growth and development of both countries' defence sectors. India has the possibility of exploring the aircraft industry, though a small one as compared to other global players, and Jindalee Operational Radar Network (JORN).

Jindalee Operational Radar Network

The JORN is a key aspect of Australia's defence infrastructure. Developed and operated by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), JORN is a long-range over-the-horizon (OTH) radar system that is used for surveillance and early warning of potential airborne threats. The system is capable of detecting aircraft and missiles at ranges of up to 3,000 km and can provide critical information for the defence of Australia's airspace.

The supply of JORN to India would be beneficial for both countries. It would provide India with a powerful tool for protecting its airspace, while also providing economic and strategic opportunities for both countries. However, there are some challenges

that would need to be addressed, such as the transfer of technology and expertise, but with proper management and planning, these can be overcome and the supply of JORN would help to further strengthen the bilateral defence cooperation between India and Australia.

India, has a growing need for advanced radar systems to monitor and defend its airspace. With increasing threats from neighbouring countries, India has been investing in a range of advanced defence systems to protect its borders and secure its airspace. In recent years, there have been discussions and talks between Australia and India over the potential supply of JORN to India as a part of bilateral defence cooperation. The talk on procurement of such technology can be revived and supply of JORN would provide India with a powerful tool for protecting its airspace and would support the Indian government's efforts to modernise its defence infrastructure.

There are several reasons why the supply of JORN to India would be beneficial for both countries. One key benefit is the potential for increased interoperability between the two countries' armed forces in the IOR. With JORN, the Indian military would have access to a powerful tool for monitoring and defending its airspace, and the system would be integrated with other Indian military systems, allowing the two countries to work more closely together in the event of a crisis.

Another benefit of the supply of JORN to India is the potential for increased economic cooperation between the two countries. The sale of JORN would likely involve the transfer of technology and expertise from Australia to India, and could also lead to further collaboration between the two countries' defence industries. This could lead to further economic opportunities for businesses in both countries and help to strengthen their overall relationship.

Moreover, the supply of JORN to India would also strengthen India's air defence capability in the Indian Ocean region. India is heavily dependent on its naval presence in the Indian Ocean for its trade and strategic interest. Having this much needed radar system would increase India's situational awareness over the ocean and would assist in detecting any potential airborne threats.

OPERATIONAL COLLABORATION

Operational Association to Counter China in the IOR

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) is a strategic forum comprised of the United States, Japan, Australia and India, that has been established to address security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. QUAD, by bringing India and Australia further close, is not to be mistaken for a military alliance. The QUAD can bring India and Australia closer militarily by providing a platform for the two countries to work together on specific areas of military cooperation, such as joint military exercises, intelligence sharing and defence equipment procurement which will help to enhance their military interoperability and military capabilities.

The Indo-Pacific region is of vital strategic importance to both India and Australia, and the increasing military assertiveness of China in the region has led to growing concerns among both countries. As a result, there is a growing need for India and Australia to work together to counter China in the Indo-Pacific region. The Indian and Australian air forces have the potential to make a significant contribution to regional security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. By working together, the two countries can enhance their military capabilities, improve their ability to respond to security threats and promote regional stability and security. The cooperation between the two countries can be mutually beneficial and can contribute to regional peace and stability in the face of growing challenges from China. Following are a few broad ways in which the Indian and Australian air forces can operationally work together.

Enhanced Joint Military Exercises

One of the most effective ways for the Indian and Australian air forces to work together is through the conduct of joint military exercises. Joint military exercises are an important tool for promoting interoperability between the armed forces of different countries. These exercises can include a range of activities, such as air-to-air and air-to-ground training, as well as simulated scenarios such as maritime surveillance, anti-submarine warfare, and disaster relief. These exercises could also include naval, amphibious and air force

exercises, which will specifically help enhance the Indian Navy's and Indian Air Force's capability to operate in a coordinated manner with the Australian Defence Forces in the Indo-Pacific region. By conducting joint exercises, the two countries can enhance their operational capabilities and increase interoperability.

Intelligence Sharing

In order to effectively counter China in the Indo-Pacific region, it is essential that India and Australia share intelligence and surveillance information on potential security threats. This could include sharing of data from maritime patrol aircraft, unmanned aerial systems and other assets, as well as sharing information on Chinese naval movements and military exercises. This would allow India and Australia to better respond to potential crises in the region, and would also help to build trust and cooperation between the two countries' intelligence agencies. The IFC-IOR of Indian navy is the ideal platform to be the focal point for such collaboration for benign, constabulary and military intelligence sharing.

Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Operations

While the focus of India and Australia's cooperation may be on countering China, it is also important for the two countries to work together to provide humanitarian aid and disaster relief support in the region. This can include the use of transport aircraft to deliver supplies and assistance to affected areas, as well as the deployment of search and rescue teams.

Strategic Diplomacy

Both nations can work closely through diplomatic and strategic channels to support and promote a rules-based and inclusive security order in the Indo-Pacific region. They can also proliferate cooperation in various formats, such as QUAD and 2+2, to strengthen their relations and align their interests. Moreover, it could be further extended to more military collaborations, not only in the military warfighting domain but even in the strategic military dialogue. One such example is the joint MoU between the aerospace think tanks of the two countries. In late 2021, the New Delhi-based think tanks,

Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) and Air and Space Power Centre of Australia (ASPC), entered into an academic collaboration, which could be considered a baby step towards strategic diplomacy in the form of pooling human resources for the common good. Similarly, India and Australia can consider sharing defence assets in the Indo-Pacific region, such as using each other's bases and ports to support their military operations and allow for rapid deployment in times of crisis. For example, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands may be one of the best places for aerial assets to operate during times of crisis or HADR operations.

Bilateral Military Exercises

India and Australia have conducted a number of exercises in the Indian Ocean region. They conduct these exercises, not only with the intention of countering China, but also to promote the regional security and stability, building trust and understanding among the countries in the region. The exercises serve as confidence-building measures, allowing the countries to work together in a coordinated and cohesive manner, increasing their ability to respond to any crisis that may arise in the region. Following are a few of the existing key military exercises that have been conducted between the two countries.

Pitch Black

Exercise Pitch Black is a biennial large-scale, multinational military exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). The Indian Air Force (IAF) participated in the Exercise Pitch Black 22 at Darwin Air Base. Spanning a duration of three weeks, the exercise saw the participation of 17 Air Forces and over 2,500 military personnel. The IAF contingent included four Su-30 MKI and two C-17 aircraft. The exercise provided an opportunity for the air forces to share best practices and experiences. The event witnessed a collaborative spirit that has led to a better understanding of each other's capabilities and a bonhomie that will lead to enduring ties between the participating nations.⁵

5. Press Information Bureau, "Exercise Pitch Black 2022 Concludes", Government of India, September 13, 2022, at <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1858987>. Accessed on January 16, 2023.

AUSINDEX

The Australia-India bilateral naval exercise, AUSINDEX, began in 2015 and has been conducted biennially since then. The exercise focuses on enhancing maritime security cooperation and includes a range of activities such as anti-submarine warfare, surface warfare, and joint air defence exercises. AUSINDEX is significant because it brings together the two countries' navies to work together in the Indian Ocean, which is considered to be of great strategic importance due to the increasing assertiveness of China in the region.

PASSEX

The Passage Exercise (PASSEX) is another bilateral naval exercise that has been conducted by India and Australia since 2015. The exercise is designed to improve the interoperability and cooperation between the two countries' navies, and includes a range of activities such as air defence exercises, surface warfare, and anti-submarine warfare. The latest exercise was conducted in 2020.

Malabar

India, Australia, Japan and the United States have been conducting the Malabar naval exercise together since 1992, but since 2020 India and Australia started conducting the exercise bilaterally, aiming to improve their naval capabilities and interoperability in the Indian Ocean. This exercise includes a wide range of activities, including anti-submarine warfare, live-fire exercises and search and rescue operations.

Yudh Abhyas

Indian and Australian armies have been conducting Yudh Abhyas exercises since 2005. It is a bilateral exercise that focuses on counterterrorism, peacekeeping operations, and other joint operations.

All of these exercises have significant operational and strategic significance in terms of India and Australia's ability to counter China in the Indian Ocean region. They allow India and Australia to improve their interoperability and cooperation and also demonstrate their commitment to regional stability and security. Additionally,

these exercises serve to enhance the capabilities of both India and Australia's armed forces, which will be critical in the face of any potential military confrontation with China in the region.

CONCLUSION

The Indo-Pacific region is of vital strategic importance to India and Australia, both economically and militarily. As the region continues to experience rapid economic growth and rising military tensions, it is essential that these countries play a vital role in maintaining stability and security in the region. Australia can also play a further vital role in maintaining maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. This can be achieved through the use of naval patrols and surveillance, as well as the development of infrastructure such as ports and airfields in key locations. This will enhance Australia's ability to monitor and respond to potential threats in the region, such as piracy and illegal fishing, as well as to provide support to other countries in the region to enhance their own maritime security capabilities. India and Australia's defence cooperation is an important aspect of their strategic partnership. Through a number of agreements and mechanisms, the two countries have been able to enhance their cooperation in areas such as maritime security, and counterterrorism. In addition, through joint military exercises, defence industry cooperation and Defence R&D, India and Australia have been able to build stronger military ties and to address common security challenges. As the two countries continue to face common security challenges, it is likely that their defence cooperation will continue to deepen in the future.