



Mains Practice Question

Q. Analyze the significance of India-Australia relations in the context of regional and global dynamics. Suggest the measures to further strengthen the relations with Australia. (250 words)

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Approach

- Start your answer with a short introduction to India-Australia relations and their shared interests.
- In the body section, mention regional and global dynamics of relations with perspectives such as political, economic and cultural, and suggest measures to further strengthen the ties.
- Conclude with significance of the relations and way forward.

Introduction

India and Australia are two major democracies in the Indo-Pacific region that share common values such as rule of law, and a commitment to an open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region. They also have converging interests and objectives in areas such as maritime security, counterterrorism, trade and investment, and cultural exchange.

The bilateral relations between the two countries have been elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2020, reflecting the depth and breadth of their engagement.

Body

The significance of India-Australia relations in the context of regional and global dynamics can be analyzed from the following perspectives:

- **Political and Strategic:**
 - India and Australia share a vision of a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region without coercion or intimidation, based on rules and respect for sovereignty.
 - India and Australia, along with the US and Japan, form the Quad, a security dialogue focused on maritime security, disaster relief, cyber security, climate change, and more.
 - India and Australia participate in regional forums like the East Asia Summit, ASEAN Regional Forum, Indian Ocean Rim Association, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation to coordinate their positions on regional and global issues.
 - India and Australia bolster their defense and security ties through ongoing dialogues, joint exercises, training, information sharing, and collaboration on defense technology.
 - They have signed key agreements, including the Defence Science and Technology Implementing Arrangement (DSTIA), and Framework Arrangement on Cyber Affairs and Critical Technology Cooperation.
- **Economic and Trade:**
 - India-Australia trade was USD 25 billion in FY22. India and Australia implemented the ECTA (Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement) in 2022.
 - India and Australia aim to finalize a comprehensive trade deal by 2023, aiming for USD 100 billion in bilateral trade, with a focus on critical minerals and enhanced cooperation.
 - Major items of trade between India and Australia include coal, iron ore, gold, copper,

education and tourism services, agricultural products, machinery, and pharmaceuticals.

- India and Australia have been in negotiations since 2011 for a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA). The aim is to enhance trade in goods and services, promote investment, and minimize non-tariff barriers.

▪ **Cultural and People-to-People:**

- India and Australia have a vibrant cultural and people-to-people relationship, with more than 9 lakh people of Indian origin living in Australia. They constitute the second-largest group of overseas-born residents in Australia.
- India is the second largest source of international students besides accounting for the largest pool of skilled migrants to Australia. According to February 2022 travel data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), more than 20,000 Australian residents returned from their trips to India.
- India and Australia have signed several agreements to promote cooperation in education, science and technology, sports, culture, media and tourism.
- The Australian government is now establishing a new, high-profile body - the Centre for Australia-India relations.
 - The Centre will also administer over USD20 million in Maitri (friendship) initiatives, including a scholars program, a grants and fellowship program and a cultural partnership.

Measures to Strengthen India-Australia Relations:

- **Enhanced Diplomatic Engagement:** Regular high-level visits, exchange programs, and strategic dialogues should be conducted to foster deeper understanding and trust between India and Australia.
- **Defense and Security Cooperation:** Strengthening defense ties, including joint exercises, defense technology transfer, and intelligence-sharing, will contribute to regional security and counter-terrorism efforts.
- **Trade and Investment Promotion:** Initiatives such as the India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) should be expedited to enhance bilateral trade, investment, and economic integration.
- **People-to-People Contacts:** Promoting cultural exchanges, tourism, and educational collaborations will deepen the understanding and goodwill between the people of India and Australia.
- **Collaboration in Science and Technology:** Expanding cooperation in fields such as space technology, cybersecurity, biotechnology, and artificial intelligence will contribute to innovation and address common global challenges.
- **Joint Research and Development:** Encouraging joint research projects, academic collaborations, and knowledge-sharing initiatives will facilitate innovation, particularly in areas of mutual interest such as agriculture, healthcare, and renewable energy.

Conclusion

The India-Australia relationship assumes significant importance in the regional and global context, given their shared strategic interests and commitment to a rules-based international order. Strengthening this partnership through enhanced diplomatic engagement, defense cooperation, trade promotion, and people-to-people contacts will foster greater regional stability, contribute to global governance, and address common challenges. By leveraging their synergies and pursuing a comprehensive strategic partnership, India and Australia can create a brighter and more prosperous future for their nations and the world at large.