

# PSIR & GS-2

## DAILY BRIEF

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PSIR OPTIONAL BY  
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# For the Indo-Pacific, a 'G Minus 2' strategy

## For the Indo-Pacific, a 'G Minus 2' strategy



RAJA MANDALA  
BY C RAJA MOHAN

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi's eastward journey this week — from Indonesia to Australia and New Zealand — marks the consolidation of a new Indo-Pacific approach that might be called "G Minus Two". The idea of a US-China condominium in Asia has always made Indian strategists uneasy. President Donald Trump's occasional references to a G2, along with his administration's decision to discard the Indo-Pacific terminology, have reinforced those anxieties.

Delhi is responding to the new dynamic between Washington and Beijing by expanding its cooperation with the rest of Asia. This is similar to the ways in which several Asian powers are dealing with the changes in US-China relations. The unfolding Asian pattern of "G Minus Two" should help shift India's Indo-Pacific debate away from sterile slogans about American intentions or Chinese ambitions. The more practical question is what India can build with the rest of Asia.

The visits to Delhi by Japanese PM Sanae Takaichi this month and South Korean President Lee Jae-myung in April underlined the urgency in Tokyo and Seoul, two key Asian allies of Washington, to widen their Asian ties. Modi's visits to Jakarta, Melbourne and Auckland point to the same logic — the im-

portance of expanding the geopolitical room for manoeuvre by strengthening cooperation among themselves.

"G Minus Two" is not about Asia turning its back on America. Quite the contrary. Most Asian countries recognise that there can be no stable balance of power in Asia without a sustained US strategic presence. China's rising military weight cannot be balanced by the rest of Asia, even if they act in concert. That is why Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand continue to build on their security partnerships with Washington. If anything, uncertainty under Trump has increased the incentive to bind the US more closely to Asian security.

India and Indonesia, despite their non-aligned tradition, have reached similar conclusions. As China flexes its military muscle, both have intensified defence cooperation with the US. Their "strategic autonomy" under China's shadow rests not on keeping America at arm's length, but on working with it and navigating Trump's mercurial diplomacy. Both Delhi and Jakarta are now "major defence partners" of Washington.

If "G Minus Two" is not about distancing from the US, neither is it about containing China. Every major Asian nation, including India and the three countries Modi is visiting this week, knows that Chinese power in Asia and the Indo-Pacific is a reality that must be managed. They also have to deal with the extraordinary economic interdependence with China.

The Asian objective is to "de-risk" Beijing's weaponisation of interdependence. India's annual trade with China is now at \$150 billion. Comparable figures for America's Asian partners underline the same reality: South Korea

trades roughly \$300 billion with China, Japan more than \$300 billion, Australia over \$200 billion, while ASEAN's trade with China has crossed the trillion-dollar mark. Commercial decoupling is not a realistic option. The Asian imperative for deeper economic cooperation among the regional powers has been reinforced by Trump's tariff wars. This logic was evident during President Lee's visit, which emphasised strategic economic cooperation, and during PM Takaichi's visit, which expanded the agenda on economic security. Similar themes of economic resilience and defence cooperation will dominate Modi's discussions in Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand.

The objective is neither an anti-China coalition nor an alternative to the American alliance system. Nor is it an attempt to create an independent bloc of middle powers. It is a practical effort to strengthen India's partnerships with the major industrial, technological and maritime powers of Asia.

Japan brings advanced manufacturing, defence technology and infrastructure finance. South Korea offers world-class capabilities in shipbuilding, semiconductors and defence production. Australia has become indispensable in critical minerals, maritime security and the stabilisation of the eastern Indian Ocean. New Zealand offers important opportunities in trade,

higher education, agriculture and advanced technologies.

Whether Washington uses the term Indo-Pacific or not, Indonesia remains the geographical and geopolitical heart of that concept. Sitting astride the confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, it occupies one of the most consequential strategic locations in the world.

Greater economic integration between two of Asia's largest markets and deeper security cooperation between Delhi and Jakarta have long been missing links in the regional search for peace and prosperity.

Taken individually, India's partnerships with Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand each advance important national interests. Collectively, however, they create something larger. They widen the strategic space available to all these countries between the US and China.

That is the essence of "G Minus Two". Asia now has a remarkably capable group of industrial, technological and maritime powers. Together, they account for a substantial share of global manufacturing, innovation, shipping and trade. Their mutual cooperation cannot replace either Washington or Beijing. It can, however, widen Asia's strategic horizons beyond the constricting imagery of a G2 world.

Ultimately, the success of India's "G Minus Two" will depend less on Modi's summit diplomacy than on India's own urgency for internal economic reform and defence modernisation. The more competitive India's economy becomes, and the stronger its defence industrial base grows, the deeper its partnerships with the rest of Asia can be. That, more than the endless speculation about US-China relations and their consequences, will determine India's place in the emerging Asian order.

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**Context** India's deepening ties with the rest of Asia as a "G minus Two" strategy without either ganging up against China or drifting away from the U.S.

## Facts

■ Trump introduced "G2": US-China coordination in Asia & discarded the "Indo-Pacific" terminology.

■ India and Indonesia both: "major defence partners" of the US and works through Washington, not away from it.

■ "G minus Two" strategy: Asian powers widening their room to manoeuvre between a feared US-China condominium.

## Analytical Crux

Asia's major & middle powers are deepening ties with each other to widen the space between Washington and Beijing. India's "G minus Two" is defined by three notions i.e. it's not an anti-China bloc, not a substitute for the American alliance system and not a middle-power club. Its logic is hedging through economic resilience and defence cooperation that make both Chinese coercion and Trump's unpredictability less costly to absorb. India's partnerships with Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand advances national interests. The strategic autonomy today means skilful engagement with all the great powers and not distance from them.

## Verbatim Quotes

"Ultimately, the success of India's 'G-Minus Two' will depend less on Modi's summit diplomacy than on India's own urgency for internal economic reform & defence modernization."

- C. Raja Mohan

# Beyond three Cs, the new lexicon of India - Australia ties

## Beyond three Cs, the new lexicon of India-Australia ties

During his visit to Australia in May 2023, when the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between India and Australia was almost three years old, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had characterised India-Australia ties as having entered T-20 mode. He also stressed that the relationship had gone beyond the conventional three Cs – of Commonwealth, Cricket and Curry – and the subsequent three Ds – Democracy, Diaspora and Dosti. As Mr. Modi undertakes his third visit to Australia this week, it would be instructive to look at some of the recent progress in two other important dimensions, the Ds of Development and Defence.



**Gopal Baglay**  
Former High  
Commissioner of  
India to Australia

### Expanding trade and investment

Growing bilateral economic cooperation has brought dividends like never before for both countries. All Indian exports to Australia now have duty free access under the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA), benefitting textiles, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, engineering goods, gems and jewellery. Preferential access to 90% of Australia's trade value has facilitated Australian exports of critical minerals, resources, wool, avocados, and macadamia. There is the shared ambition to raise bilateral trade from \$33 billion in 2025 towards \$100 bn by 2030.

The two-way cumulative investment is approaching \$50 billion. Australia's AirTrunk recently announced plans to invest \$30 billion by 2030 to develop digital infrastructure and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-ready data centre. Australian funds are increasingly active in India. At the same time, India is an important source of investment and technology. Indian investment in Australia's resources sector is well known. According to reports, Perdaman Chemicals & Fertilizers, founded by an Indian, is establishing Australia's largest urea plant in western Australia, with \$4.5 billion. This largest ever investment in Australia's fertilizer industry has also created millions of man hours of work in India where over 98% of the plant's modules are manufactured.

Defence represents perhaps the fastest growing sector of bilateral cooperation. In a clear signal of the importance of India as a reliable partner, Australia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles visited India in his first foreign tours in both the terms of the Albanese government. Before his most recent visit for the Annual Defence Ministers' Dialogue last month, Mr. Marles had hosted Defence

A growing  
partnership now  
spans trade,  
defence, energy,  
education and  
innovation

Minister Rajnath Singh in Australia last year, marking the first visit by an Indian Defence Minister to the country in 12 years. Regular leadership and other senior level exchanges involving all the three Services and participation in bilateral and multilateral military exercises such as AUSINDEX, Malabar and Talisman Sabre foster operational understanding and coordination, significant especially in the maritime domain.

There are growing opportunities for defence industry cooperation in cyber, AI, drone, and in view of India's expanding ship-building capabilities.

### The 'E' factor

Beyond the Cs and the Ds, there are also enriching Es: Energy and Education. India-Australia Renewable Energy Partnership is implemented through a Solar Taskforce and a Green Hydrogen Task Force, and guided at the ministerial level.

India's unprecedented renewable energy targets present immense potential for clean energy cooperation across critical minerals and materials, manufacturing, laboratory research, commercial-scale deployment, industrial use, and solar rooftops.

Very recently, Australian media mentioned that arrangements for future Australian uranium exports to India might be finalised shortly. Were that to happen, India's ambitious civil nuclear programme will receive a significant boost, as would Australia's uranium exports.

The India-Australia education and skills partnership is steadily contributing to creation of an enduring base for future-ready youth, innovators and entrepreneurs. While more than one lakh Indian students are enrolled in Australia, world class and affordable education is now available in India itself through Indian campuses of a growing number of Australian universities. Joint research in priority areas such as advanced computing, energy, health care, space and defence promises to create both intellectual assets and networks. Specific visa programmes have created new avenues for educated Indian youth seeking employment opportunities in Australia and await better utilisation.

Australia's global leadership in imparting vocational skills is being tapped in areas such as solar rooftop and mining, including in Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha. Practical solutions can pave way for meeting Australia's huge workforce

shortfall and spur its economy with Indian workers temporarily assigned to Australia.

Sport has emerged as a new priority. Focused and broad based strategy can propel cooperation in sport education, training, medicine, goods, infrastructure and organisation of large-scale events, such as Commonwealth Games 2030 and Brisbane Olympics in 2032. With the growing Indian diaspora in Australia, now over ten lakh and rightly called the living bridge, Indian traditional sports such as kabaddi and kho kho are gaining popularity, even beyond the diaspora community.

### Building multilateral partnerships

The upward trajectory of the bilateral relationship owes itself to a high degree of mutual trust, understanding and respect. Broad convergence of values and interests expands the format of cooperation to trilateral, such as India-Indonesia-Australia and India-France-Australia. The Australia-Canada-India Technology and Innovation Partnership, launched in November 2025, the India-Japan-Australia Supply Chain Resilience Initiative and a possible triad with the United Arab Emirates could play important roles in countering supply chain disruptions and market dominance and distortions in crucial areas such as critical minerals, rare earths, semiconductors and new technologies.

The shared vision of India and Australia for a free, open, safe, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific manifests in their work through fora such as the Quad and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). The foreign visits this week by Mr. Modi and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese bring out the geopolitical logic for ever-growing cooperation between India and Australia at regional and global levels. Their existing ties with Pacific Island Countries provide a good basis for leveraging their respective strengths to the benefit of the region in areas such as education, health, technology, fintech, capacity building and disaster relief.

Mr. Albanese never tires of mentioning his connection with India as a young backpacker. His understanding of the significance of a consequential relationship with today's India and the close chemistry between the two leaders have set the perfect stage to progress bilateral ties in T20 mode but in the long format, and to multiple win-win outcomes for both.

*The views expressed are personal*

**Context** India-Australia partnership has outgrown from "three Cs" and matured into development, defence, energy, education, sport and a web of multilateral partnerships.

## Facts

India - Australia : moved from 3Cs (Commonwealth, Curry, Cricket) and 3Ds (Democracy, Diaspora, Dosti) to new Ds as Development and Defence & new Es as Energy & Education.

Bilateral trade ambition : from \$33 billion in 2025 to \$100 billion by 2030.

■ ECTA (Economic Cooperation & Trade Agreement): duty-free access for all Indian exports & preferential access to 90% of Australia's trade value.

## Analytical Crux

The India-Australia relationship has shifted from sentiment (Cricket, Curry, Commonwealth) to strategic substance i.e. Development and Defence driven by a shared understanding of the Indo-Pacific and China. Its durability comes from diversification of trade (ECTA moving towards CECA), critical minerals, clean energy, uranium, education and a ten-lakh diaspora acting as a "living bridge". There is a comprehensive strategic partnership advanced through multilaterals i.e. Quad, IORA, the India-Japan-Australia and Australia-Canada-India groupings rather than a treaty alliance, giving both countries cooperation without entanglement.

# A Wooden Left

The Telegraph *online*

Wednesday, 08 July 2026

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Home / Opinion / A wooden Left - why Left parties lost all states in India

## A wooden Left

For millions living with uncertainty, religion offers emotional anchoring, symbolic dignity, moral structure, and a sense of community. Rational critique alone cannot replace these functions

Soumyajit Bhar | Published 07.07.26, 09:50 AM



**Context** The first time in 7 decades no major Left party governs any Indian state. However, the Left's decline is not merely organisational but emotional.

## Facts

M.K. Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore : politics cannot survive through rational critique alone ; need of song, symbol and ethical practices.

## Verbatim Quotes

“The crisis of the Left, therefore, is not merely electoral. It is also a crisis of modernity itself. Rationality alone cannot sustain democratic life. Information alone cannot produce ethical transformation.”  
- Soumyajit Bhar

## Analytical Crux

The Left's collapse is not an organisational failure but as an emotional and philosophical one. It built politics on the assumption that argument and information would produce secular, egalitarian citizens and forgot that people also act through fear, humiliation, aspiration, loneliness and the search for meaning. The moment one decides the masses are duped, they stop listening to them and progressive politics becomes an enlightened minority lecturing society. Religion wins not because people are irrational but because it supplies dignity, community and meaning that critique alone cannot. Therefore songs, symbols, rituals, poetry and shared ethical practices are not decorative additions to politics. They are attempts to cultivate emotional worlds capable of sustaining collective life.

**PSIR Paper I 2025:** Do you think that legitimacy acquired by consent or manufactured by indoctrination is an essential element in maintenance of political rule? Justify your answer with relevant examples.

**PSIR Paper II 2025:** India maintains strong ties with countries that will assure a free and open Indo-Pacific and guarantee greater connectivity with rest of the world. Analyze.

**PSIR Paper II 2024:** Discuss the rationale behind replacing the 'Asia-Pacific' strategy with the new term 'Indo-Pacific' strategy.

**PSIR Paper II 2024:** India and USA have become such strong strategic partners that they need not become formal allies. Comment.

**PSIR Paper II 2024:** Does the idea of the 21st century as 'Asian century' continue to remain feasible given the growing friction between India and China?

**PSIR Paper II 2023:** Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) performs an important role in India's strategic balancing act to withstand the dominance of China in Asia. Discuss.

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