

India-UK Relations Roadmap 2030 And Beyond: A Comprehensive Strategic Vision

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Abstract

The India-UK Roadmap 2030 outlines a comprehensive strategic vision for deepening bilateral ties between India and the United Kingdom across key sectors, reinforcing both nations' commitment to economic growth, sustainability, and global leadership. As the global geopolitical and economic landscape undergoes rapid transformation—shaped by the UK's post-Brexit realignments and India's emergence as a key global actor—the roadmap serves as a forward-looking framework to deepen collaboration. The paper critically examines the five key pillars of the roadmap: economic cooperation, with a focus on the much-anticipated India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA); defense and security, including intelligence-sharing and Indo-Pacific cooperation; health and innovation, emphasizing joint research, pandemic preparedness and digital healthcare; climate action, highlighting commitments under COP26 and joint green energy initiatives; and people-to-people ties, driven by diaspora contributions, education partnerships, and evolving immigration policies. Additionally, the paper explores the challenges that may hinder progress, such as unresolved trade barriers, geopolitical divergences, security trust deficits, post-Brexit uncertainties, and strategic misalignments in the Indo-Pacific. Beyond 2030, India-UK relations will need strategic recalibration to adapt to emerging global trends. The paper examines possible future scenarios—ranging from strengthened economic integration to potential geopolitical divergences—and outlines strategic pathways to institutionalize cooperation in an evolving multipolar world. The significance of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of how India and the UK can navigate these opportunities and challenges to create a sustainable, forward-thinking and adaptive partnership beyond 2030. It aims to provide strategic insights into how the roadmap can serve as a living document, evolving with emerging global realities, and evolve beyond 2030, ensuring that bilateral ties remain dynamic, resilient, and mutually beneficial.

Keywords: India-UK Relations, Strategic Partnership, Bilateral Ties, Free Trade Agreement (FTA), Security and Defense Cooperation, Geopolitical Challenges, Future Scenarios, Strategic Pathways.

1.Introduction

India and the UK share a long, historical, and complex relationship shaped by colonial ties, diplomacy, and cultural exchanges. After India's independence in 1947, bilateral ties were influenced by the legacy of the British Raj and the presence of a large Indian diaspora in the UK. The late 20th and early 21st centuries saw an expansion of these ties, particularly after the Cold War, with increasing trade flows, investment, and defense collaborations. Over time, relations evolved based on mutual economic interests, educational collaborations, and strategic partnerships in forums like the Commonwealth, United Nations, and G7. The 2004 UK-India Strategic Partnership laid the groundwork for deeper cooperation, further strengthened by initiatives such as the UK-India Tech Partnership (2018) and the Enhanced Trade Partnership (2021).

In the 21st century, shifting geopolitical and economic dynamics have reshaped UK-India relations. India's rise as a global economic power and the UK's post-Brexit realignment have created new imperatives for cooperation. Both countries have recognized the need to deepen collaboration in trade, security, and technology while navigating shared interests in global governance and regional stability. A key area of convergence is their vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific, which aligns their defense and security priorities. These evolving dynamics have set the stage for a more structured and long-term approach to bilateral cooperation, culminating in the India-UK Roadmap 2030, a blueprint for strengthening ties over the next decade.

The adoption of the India-UK Roadmap to 2030 during the virtual summit held on 4th May 2021 exemplifies this forward-looking approach¹. This initiative was unveiled during the virtual summit between United Kingdoms Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, reflecting both countries commitment to a deeper and more dynamic bilateral relationship for the next ten years. Alongside the roadmap, a joint statement was published² which reaffirmed both prime ministers' commitment to "enhanced bilateral India-UK cooperation" and summarized the key points of the roadmap. Expanding on this framework, Boris Johnson visited India in April 2022 to discuss defence, diplomacy, and trade with Narendra

1 Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. 2021. "Roadmap 2030 for India-UK Future Relations Launched During India-UK Virtual Summit." May 4. [https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-](https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/33838/Roadmap+2030+for+IndiaUK+future+relations+launched+during+IndiaUK+Virtual+Summit+4+May+2021)

[documents.htm?dtl/33838/Roadmap+2030+for+IndiaUK+future+relations+launched+during+IndiaUK+Virtual+Summit+4+May+2021](https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/33838/Roadmap+2030+for+IndiaUK+future+relations+launched+during+IndiaUK+Virtual+Summit+4+May+2021)

2 Ministry of External Affairs, India. 2021. Joint Statement on India-UK Virtual Summit: Roadmap 2030 for a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. May 4, 2021.

[https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-](https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/33837%2FJoint+Statement+on+IndiaUK+Virtual+Summit+Roadmap+2030+for+a+Comprehensive+Strategic+Partnership)

[documents.htm?dtl/33837%2FJoint+Statement+on+IndiaUK+Virtual+Summit+Roadmap+2030+for+a+Comprehensive+Strategic+Partnership](https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/33837%2FJoint+Statement+on+IndiaUK+Virtual+Summit+Roadmap+2030+for+a+Comprehensive+Strategic+Partnership).

Modi³. Following the meeting, another joint statement was published. The statement noted that both prime ministers agreed to “elevate India-UK relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership”⁴.

The India-UK Roadmap 2030 lays out a comprehensive strategy for enhancing bilateral relations across five key areas:

1. Trade and economic cooperation – boosting trade volumes and finalizing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
2. Security and defense collaboration – expanding military and intelligence cooperation.
3. Climate and sustainability initiatives – promoting innovation in clean energy and sustainable development.
4. Health and innovation – advancing research in healthcare, technology, and artificial intelligence.
5. People-to-people ties – strengthening educational and cultural exchanges.

By fostering deeper collaboration in these areas, the roadmap positions India and the UK as strategic partners in addressing global challenges while unlocking new opportunities for mutual growth. As the world faces economic uncertainties, climate change concerns, and geopolitical tensions, the roadmap serves as a crucial instrument for ensuring that UK-India relations remain resilient, forward-looking, and adaptable.

This article provides a detailed examination of the India-UK Roadmap 2030, focusing on its five key pillars. It further assesses the challenges that could hinder progress, including trade barriers, geopolitical divergences, security limitations, and post-Brexit uncertainties. Recognizing the importance of a long-term strategic vision, the study goes beyond the roadmap to explore the possible future scenarios for India-UK relations beyond 2030, considering potential geopolitical shifts, economic realignments, and security dynamics. Finally, it presents strategic pathways for institutionalizing cooperation and strengthening bilateral ties in the coming decades, offering policy recommendations in trade, defense, technology, climate action, and cultural diplomacy. Through this comprehensive analysis, the article aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how India and the UK can navigate emerging challenges and opportunities, ensuring a dynamic and future-ready partnership that extends well beyond 2030.

3 Prime Minister’s Office. 2022. “PM: UK-India Partnership ‘Brings Security and Prosperity for Our People.’” GOV.UK, April 22, 2022. <https://www.gov.uk>.

4Prime Minister’s Office. 2022. “UK-India Joint Statement April 2022: Towards Shared Security and Prosperity Through National Resilience.” GOV.UK, April 22. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prime-minister-boris-johnsons-visit-to-india-april-2022-uk-india-joint-statements/uk-india-joint-statement-april-2022-towards-shared-security-and-prosperity-through-national-resilience>

2. Key Pillars of the UK-India Roadmap 2030

The UK-India Roadmap to 2030 is a multifaceted strategy that seeks to deepen bilateral relations across five critical areas: trade and economic cooperation, security and defense collaboration, climate change and sustainable development, health and innovation, and people-to-people ties and cultural exchange. Below is a detailed exploration of these components:

2.1 Trade and Economic Cooperation

Trade and economic cooperation are central to the UK-India Roadmap 2030, aiming to double bilateral trade by 2030. Both nations are working to remove trade barriers, enhance market access, and deepen investment ties. Key initiatives like the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and sectoral collaborations highlight their shared economic ambitions.

Bilateral Trade and Free Trade Agreement (FTA):

Trade has been a key pillar of India-UK relations, reflecting deep historical ties and mutual economic interests. As part of the India-UK Roadmap to 2030, both nations have committed to expanding trade and investment, with the goal of doubling bilateral trade by 2030. A key initiative is the Enhanced Trade Partnership, paving the way for a FTA⁵ aimed at removing trade barriers, reducing tariffs, and expanding market access. It covers 26 chapters in goods, services, and investments relating to tariff reductions, market access, intellectual property rights, and rules of origin. High tariffs on UK exports like whiskey and automobiles, as well as regulatory constraints on Indian IT and pharmaceutical sectors, remain key negotiation points. An FTA would unlock significant economic potential, targeting a doubling of bilateral trade by 2030.

Case Study: Scotch Whisky and Tariff Barriers

One of the most notable trade barriers in India-UK trade relations is the 150% tariff on Scotch whisky imports into India, making it one of the most expensive markets for UK whisky producers. The Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) has long pushed for tariff reductions, arguing that lowering these duties could significantly boost UK exports and increase government revenue in India by promoting legal sales over the grey market.

For example, Diageo, a UK-based multinational beverage company and one of the world's largest producers of Scotch whisky, has been actively lobbying for a reduction of these tariffs as

⁵Department for International Trade. 2022. "UK-India Free Trade Agreement: The UK's Strategic Approach." January

11. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1046839/uk-india-free-trade-agreement-the-uks-strategic-approach.pdf

part of the FTA negotiations. A lower tariff rate would not only boost UK whisky sales in India but also create employment opportunities in both countries—enhancing bottling, distribution, and retail networks in India while expanding UK exports. A successful FTA could see UK whisky exports to India increase by up to 200%, according to SWA estimates.

Conversely, Indian businesses in the IT and pharmaceutical sectors face regulatory challenges in the UK market. Companies like Infosys and Sun Pharma have raised concerns over UK visa restrictions and stringent regulatory approvals for Indian medicines, impacting their ability to expand operations. Addressing these barriers within the FTA framework is crucial for achieving a balanced trade deal.

Investment and Economic Partnerships

Indian Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the UK amounted to GBP 9.3 billion in 2021, while British FDI in India was valued at GBP 19.1 billion⁶. India has been the second-biggest source of FDI into the UK for five consecutive years in terms of the number of projects. In terms of value, the most recent stats show a 28% year-on-year increase in investment stock at the end of 2023⁷. Indian companies play a crucial role in job creation in the UK. Tata Group alone employs over 75,000 people in the country, while other major investors like Infosys and Wipro contribute significantly. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom is the sixth-largest investor in India, with British investments spanning key sectors like financial services, infrastructure, and renewable energy. Initiatives such as the UK-India Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD), UK-India Infrastructure Financing Bridge (UKIIFB), India-UK CEOs Forum, Global India Forum, India-UK Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO), and UK-India Business Council (UKIBC) facilitate ongoing engagement, ensuring both economies remain interconnected.

High-Growth Sectors of Collaboration:

The UK-India Roadmap 2030 highlights key sectors for enhanced collaboration. The technology and digital economy are central, with the UK-India Tech Partnership driving innovation in AI, block chain, and digital payments. In pharmaceuticals and healthcare, India remains a key supplier of generic medicines, while UK firms collaborate on biotech, vaccine development, and healthcare technology. The Green Growth Partnership promotes joint investments in solar, wind, and hydrogen energy to support climate goals. These strategic collaborations aim to boost economic growth and innovation, aligning with the roadmap's broader objectives.

⁶Department for International Trade. 2022. "UK-India Free Trade Agreement: The UK's Strategic Approach." January 11. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1046839/uk-india-free-trade-agreement-the-uks-strategic-approach.pdf

⁷Department for Business and Trade. 2024. "DBT Inward Investment Results 2023 to 2024." Last modified July 24, 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dbt-inward-investment-results-2023-to-2024/dbt-inward-investment-results-2023-to-2024-html-version>

Recent Trade Developments

Bilateral trade between India and the UK increased to USD 21.34 billion in 2023-24 from USD 20.36 billion in 2022-2023⁸. India was the UK's 11th largest trading partner in the four quarters up to the end of Q2 2024, while the UK was India's 14th largest trading partner. This growth is attributed to increased business activity and a surge in payments between the two countries. According to official UK Department for Business and Trade (DBT) statistics, the total trade in goods and services between the UK and India was GBP 42 billion in the four quarters to the end of 2024⁹. This is expected to be significantly enhanced with an FTA, negotiations for which began in January 2022 before being paused in the fourteenth round for general elections in both countries in 2024¹⁰.

Resumption of FTA Negotiations

India and the UK have officially resumed negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) after an eight-month hiatus due to general elections in both countries. UK Business and Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds met with Indian Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal in New Delhi on February 24, 2025, to advance discussions. The deal aims to deliver economic growth and bring the Indian economy to the world's third-largest by 2028¹¹. Both nations aim to expedite the FTA to enhance bilateral trade. The resumption of FTA negotiations reflects a mutual commitment to strengthening economic and strategic relations, with both countries striving to resolve outstanding issues to achieve a balanced and forward-looking agreement.

With strong investment flows and ongoing FTA negotiations, the UK-India economic partnership is poised for significant growth. As trade expands and sectoral ties strengthen, this collaboration will drive mutual prosperity and innovation.

2.2 Security and Defense Collaboration

Security and defense cooperation form a vital pillar of the UK-India Roadmap 2030, reflecting shared commitments to counterterrorism, regional stability, and strategic security in the Indo-Pacific. Growing geopolitical challenges, including China's rising influence, cyber threats, and maritime security concerns, have strengthened bilateral engagement across military partnerships, defense technology, counterterrorism, and cyber security.

⁸Ibid

⁹Ibid

¹⁰Business Standard. 2024. "Business Activity Between India, UK Flourishes in 2024, Shows HSBC Data." Business Standard, December 17, 2024. https://www.business-standard.com/industry/banking/business-activity-between-india-uk-flourishes-in-2024-shows-hsbc-data-124121700939_1.html

¹¹UK Government. 2025. "Talks Relaunch on India Trade Deal to Boost UK's Growth Agenda." GOV.UK, February. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/talks-relaunch-on-india-trade-deal-to-boost-uks-growth-agenda>

Military Cooperation and Strategic Partnerships:

India and the UK share a long-standing military partnership, reinforced through joint exercises, strategic dialogues, and defense cooperation. Both nations conduct regular bilateral exercises such as KONKAN (Navy), INDRADHANUSH (Air Force), and Ajeya Warrior (Army) to enhance operational interoperability, while Konkan Shakti, a tri-service exercise, strengthens integrated joint warfare capabilities. The UK and India also collaborate through multilateral exercises like Malabar, where the UK has shown interest in deeper engagement. High-level dialogues, including the India-UK Defence Consultative Group (DCG) and the Strategic Defence Dialogue, facilitate defense policy coordination. Additionally, both countries are strengthening defense industrial cooperation, particularly in joint weapons development and defense technology sharing. These efforts highlight a growing commitment to regional stability, force modernization, and enhanced military interoperability.

Defense Technology and Industrial Collaboration:

Defense manufacturing and technology-sharing remain central to bilateral cooperation. Under Make in India, UK firms such as BAE Systems¹², Rolls-Royce, and MBDA partner with Indian companies to co-develop advanced military equipment. Rolls-Royce and India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)¹³ are jointly developing next-generation fighter aircraft engines, while collaboration on naval weaponry, cyber-defense, and AI-driven warfare systems continues to expand. Reinforcing these efforts, on January 9, 2024, Shri Rajnath Singh held a bilateral meeting with UK Defence Secretary Grant Shapps, focusing on enhancing defense industrial cooperation¹⁴. This was followed by the signing of two agreements: a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on a bilateral international cadet exchange program and a Letter of Arrangement between India's DRDO and the UK's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) to strengthen collaboration in defense research and development.

In February 2025, during the Aero India event, India and the UK launched the Defence Partnership-India (DP-I), focusing on next-generation weapon systems. This initiative includes agreements on advanced weapons systems such as the Lightweight Beyond Visual Range Missile (LBRM) and the Advanced Short Range Air-to-Air Missile (ASRAAM), aligning with India's Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) vision¹⁵.

¹²BAE Systems. 2023. Annual Report 2023. Accessed January 24, 2025. <https://www.baesystems.com/en-media/uploadFile/20210404032630/1434601811861.pdf>.

¹³Rolls-Royce. 2019. "Co-Creating the Future of Combat." December. <https://www.rolls-royce.com/country-sites/india/discover/2019/12-co-creating-the-future-of-combat.aspx>

¹⁴Press Information Bureau. 2024. "Raksha Mantri & His UK Counterpart Co-Chair UK-India Defence Industry CEOs Roundtable in London." Ministry of Defence, January 10, 2024. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1994935>

¹⁵UK Government. 2025. "UK-India Defence Agreements Boost Atmanirbhar Bharat Ambition." GOV.UK, February 10, 2025. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-india-defence-agreements-boost-atmanirbhar-bharat-ambition>

Counterterrorism, Intelligence Sharing and cybetsecurity:

India and the UK have cooperated on counterterrorism since January 2002 with the formation of the Joint Working Group (JWG) on terrorism¹⁶. Both nations prioritize counterterrorism efforts, sharing intelligence and collaborating through the global bodies like Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The UK has supported India's stance on countering terror financing and extremism, particularly concerning Pakistan-based groups. Additionally, India and the UK are part of common security alliances, such as the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing network (through UK membership) and the Commonwealth, fostering a broader framework for defense intelligence collaboration. Cybersecurity cooperation has also deepened, with agreements to combat ransomware, enhance cloud security, and protect critical infrastructure¹⁷. The Second India-UK 2+2 Foreign and Defence Dialogue, held in December 2024, underscored the importance of collaborative efforts in counter-terrorism, cyber security, and maritime security. Both nations agreed to expand their cooperation to deter and disrupt terrorist activities, ensuring the safety and security of their citizens¹⁸.

Maritime Security and Indo-Pacific Strategy:

Recognizing the Indo-Pacific's strategic importance, India and the UK coordinate on joint naval patrols, anti-piracy missions, and maritime intelligence-sharing. The UK though not a direct partner aligns with India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision, working alongside allies like Australia, Japan, and the US to ensure regional stability and freedom of navigation. The UK has also joined the Indian Navy's IOR Information Fusion Center (IFC-IOR) in Gurugram to deepen maritime domain awareness in the Indo-Pacific. As part of the Indo-Pacific Tilt strategy, the UK bolstered its regional security presence in 2021 with the deployment of the HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier and its Carrier Strike Group (CSG-21). During this deployment, the Carrier Strike Group conducted joint exercises with the Indian Navy in the Bay of Bengal under Exercise Konkan Shakti 2021, reinforcing UK-India maritime security cooperation and interoperability¹⁹.

The UK-India security and defense partnership continues to evolve, driven by shared strategic interests and regional security challenges. Strengthened military cooperation, joint defense

16Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. 2002. The New Delhi Declaration: India and United Kingdom: Partnership for a Better and Safer World. January 6. https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/7509/the_new_delhi_declaration_india_and_united_kingdom_partnership_for_a_b

17UK Government. 2022. "India-UK Cyber Statement: April 2022." April 22, 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prime-minister-boris-johnsons-visit-to-india-april-2022-uk-india-joint-statements/india-uk-cyber-statement-april-2022>

18Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. 2024. "Second India-UK 2+2 Foreign and Defence Dialogue." December 3, 2024. Accessed February 26, 2025. <https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/38668>

19UK Government. 2021. "UK-India Tri-Service Exercise Konkan Shakti 2021." GOV.UK, October 21, 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-india-tri-service-exercise-konkan-shakti>

technology initiatives, and intelligence-sharing efforts underscore a deepening commitment to stability in the Indo-Pacific. As both nations expand their counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and maritime security collaborations, their defense ties are set to play a crucial role in ensuring regional and global security.

2.3 Climate Change and Sustainable Development

Climate change and sustainability are key to the India-UK Roadmap 2030, reflecting their commitment to carbon neutrality, green energy, and environmental resilience. Amid growing concerns over extreme weather and energy security, both nations are enhancing cooperation in renewable energy, climate finance, carbon reduction, and sustainable infrastructure. Their collaboration aligns with COP26, COP28, the Paris Agreement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reinforcing their role in global climate action.

India-UK Commitments Under COP26 and Beyond

One of the most significant areas of collaboration for the two nations is their shared commitments under the UN Climate Change Conferences. At COP26 (2021), India set its Panchamrit Climate Commitments, targeting net-zero by 2070 and 50% renewable energy use by 2030²⁰, while the UK pledged net-zero by 2050. The UK-India Green Growth Partnership was subsequently launched to accelerate the transition to green energy, facilitate clean technology transfer, and scale up investments in climate resilience.

However, differences remain regarding timelines for achieving net-zero emissions, and India continues to push for more significant climate finance commitments from developed nations. At COP26, India insisted on using the term "phase-down" instead of "phase-out" for coal, emphasizing its need for a gradual transition to maintain economic growth and energy security. The UK, having already committed to completely phasing out coal by 2024, advocates for a faster global transition away from fossil fuels.

Renewable Energy Collaboration

A key area of India-UK cooperation is the development of renewable energy projects, particularly in solar, wind, and green hydrogen energy. The UK supports India's International Solar Alliance (ISA) and is investing in offshore wind energy projects to help India diversify its clean energy mix. Both countries are also collaborating on green hydrogen technology, which has the potential to revolutionize industries like steel production and heavy transportation by reducing dependence on fossil fuels. However, the UK sees green hydrogen as a future energy

20Press Information Bureau. 2022. "India, U.K. Hold Talks to Strengthen Defence Cooperation." Government of India, January 7, 2022
<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1795071>

source, but concerns over intellectual property rights (IPR) and technology-sharing agreements have slowed collaboration. India has called for open-access clean technology transfer to accelerate hydrogen production, while the UK prefers market-driven technology exchanges.

Climate Finance and Green Investment

Climate finance plays a pivotal role in India-UK sustainability collaboration, as India requires substantial investments to transition towards a low-carbon economy. The UK has pledged to mobilize green finance through initiatives such as the Climate Finance Leadership Initiative (CFLI)²¹ India, which supports sustainable infrastructure development. Additionally, British financial institutions are investing in green bonds and carbon trading mechanisms to help Indian firms decarbonize operations and adopt eco-friendly business models. The UK's support for India's participation in global carbon markets also enables Indian industries to monetize emissions reductions through carbon credits. However, ensuring affordable climate finance, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and aligning sustainability policies remains a challenge. To address this, India and the UK must streamline investment processes, promote transparent green finance mechanisms, and expand concessional climate funding.

Sustainable Urban Development and Smart Cities

With India's rapid urbanization, sustainable urban infrastructure is a crucial area of cooperation. The UK-India Smart Cities Partnership²² focuses on climate-resilient urban planning, sustainable transportation, energy-efficient buildings, and smart grids. British firms are actively involved in waste-to-energy projects, sustainable housing, and water conservation initiatives in major Indian cities. Collaborative research efforts are also helping integrate low-carbon transport solutions and circular economy practices into urban development frameworks.***However, bottlenecks such as funding gaps, policy implementation delays, and the need for stronger local governance hinder progress. Moving forward, both countries should scale up smart city investments, encourage technology-driven urban sustainability models, and enhance cooperation in green mobility solutions.

Biodiversity Conservation and Environmental Protection

India and the UK are also partnering on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration, recognizing the importance of protecting forests, water bodies, and wildlife habitats. The UK's investments in afforestation projects, sustainable agriculture, and marine ecosystem conservation in India are aimed at enhancing carbon sequestration and ecological balance. The two nations are

21Climate Finance Leadership Initiative India. 2021. Mobilizing Investment: India. September. <https://www.bloomberg.com/cfli/mobilizing-investment/india/>

22Climate and Development Knowledge Network. 2025. India-UK Partnership on Climate-Smart Cities. Accessed February 24, 2025. <https://cdkn.org/sites/default/files/files/India-UK-Partnership-Climate-Smart-Cities.pdf>

also cooperating on clean air policies to address pollution challenges in Indian cities, with British experts supporting India's National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). Additionally, they are collaborating on reducing plastic waste and promoting circular economy initiatives, including recycling programs and sustainable packaging solutions. Despite these efforts, deforestation, land degradation, and industrial pollution remain key challenges. To strengthen this collaboration, both countries must expand environmental policy frameworks, invest in nature-based solutions, and engage in stronger community-driven conservation initiatives.

The partnership between India and the UK in climate change and sustainable development is a fundamental component of the Roadmap 2030, reflecting their shared vision for a greener and more resilient global future. While challenges remain in financing, policy coordination, and infrastructure development, both nations have strong incentives to enhance their cooperation in renewable energy, climate finance, and urban sustainability. By expanding clean energy partnerships, mobilizing greater investments, and strengthening technological collaboration, India and the UK can accelerate their transition to a low-carbon economy and lead global climate action efforts beyond 2030.

2.4 Health and Innovation

Health and innovation are key pillars of the India-UK Roadmap 2030, aiming to enhance healthcare systems, medical research, and technology-driven solutions. Building on successful collaborations like the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, both nations seek to advance biomedical research, digital health, and pandemic preparedness, ensuring equitable healthcare access and global health security.

Strengthening Healthcare Collaboration

India and the UK have a long-standing partnership in pharmaceuticals, vaccines, and healthcare services. Under the roadmap, they aim to accelerate vaccine R&D, develop next-generation therapeutics, and strengthen public health infrastructure. Aligning regulatory frameworks for pharmaceuticals and medical devices will streamline approvals and foster global healthcare advancements. Through a collaboration with India's Serum Institute of India (SII), the two countries produced and distributed over 2 billion COVISHIELD doses covering around 80% of Indians' first and second doses, with 5 million doses provided to the UK in March 2021 to fill supply gaps. The partnership also resulted in a groundbreaking malaria vaccine (lowest cost in the world with same efficacy as existing products) authorised by WHO in October 2023. SII and Oxford University also developed an Ebola vaccine at pace in August 2023 for a WHO clinical trial in response to an outbreak in Uganda²³.

23UK Science and Innovation Network. 2024. Science and Innovation Network India Summary: April 2024. UK Government. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6630caace3f1dd574cad210/SIN_India_Summary_April_2024.pdf

Expanding Digital Health and Telemedicine

Digital health and telemedicine have become increasingly vital in healthcare accessibility, and India and the UK are exploring ways to integrate technology into patient care. The use of AI-driven diagnostics, predictive analytics, and remote healthcare solutions is expected to revolutionize how healthcare is delivered in both countries. India's rapidly expanding digital health sector, combined with the UK's expertise in healthcare AI, provides an opportunity to develop innovative telemedicine solutions that can reach underserved populations in rural areas. Additionally, integrating electronic health records (EHRs) across healthcare systems will allow for better patient data management and continuity of care. The roadmap also encourages investments in health-tech startups, facilitating cross-border collaborations between Indian and UK-based companies to drive innovation in digital health services.

Medical Research and Biotechnology

The India-UK partnership in biomedical and genetic research is poised to expand significantly beyond 2030. Both nations are working together on genomics projects to better understand diseases and develop personalized medicine. Research collaborations in cancer treatments, rare genetic disorders, and infectious disease control are expected to drive significant medical breakthroughs. By fostering exchange programs for medical researchers and students, both countries can encourage knowledge sharing and capacity building in cutting-edge medical science. India's expertise in biopharmaceuticals and the UK's leadership in biotech innovation create a strong foundation for advancing research in areas like stem cell therapy, AI-assisted drug discovery, and precision medicine. These efforts will contribute to developing novel therapies and making advanced treatments more accessible and affordable.

Pandemic Preparedness and Global Health Security

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of global health security and coordinated pandemic response mechanisms. India and the UK are committed to developing rapid response systems for future health emergencies, including joint disease surveillance initiatives, emergency response training, and resilient vaccine supply chains. Both countries are also supporting WHO-led initiatives to enhance global preparedness and equitable vaccine distribution. Investing in biopharmaceutical supply chain resilience will be key to preventing future disruptions in the availability of essential medicines and vaccines. As global leaders in healthcare and innovation, India and the UK are working towards strengthening pandemic early-warning systems, ensuring that they can jointly respond to future health crises more effectively.

Artificial Intelligence and Digital Technology

The UK and India are collaborating on AI and digital technology through the UK-India Emerging Technologies Partnership, fostering joint research and industrial cooperation. The UK

has invested in AI-driven healthcare in India, focusing on disease detection and predictive analytics, while Indian AI startups work with British firms on automation and cybersecurity. The UK-India Digital Health Partnership advances AI applications in remote healthcare, telemedicine, and predictive diagnostics. Both nations are also developing regulatory frameworks for ethical AI use, balancing innovation with privacy and governance. However, challenges like data privacy concerns, intellectual property rights (IPR) complexities, and the lack of uniform AI regulations hinder seamless collaboration. To overcome these, policymakers must enhance data-sharing agreements, streamline IPR policies, and establish joint AI research hubs to drive innovation and cooperation.

The India-UK Roadmap 2030 lays the foundation for a long-term health and innovation partnership, ensuring that both nations remain at the forefront of medical advancements and healthcare technology. By integrating digital health solutions, expanding research collaborations, and strengthening pandemic preparedness, India and the UK are shaping a future where healthcare is more accessible, efficient, and responsive to global challenges. This collaboration not only benefits their domestic healthcare sectors but also reinforces their role in global health governance and medical innovation. Beyond 2030, continuous engagement in health diplomacy, research investment, and digital transformation will be essential to sustaining this dynamic and impactful partnership.

2.5 People-to-People Ties and Cultural Exchange

People-to-people ties are the foundation of India-UK relations, strengthened by a vibrant Indian diaspora, educational exchanges, and cultural collaborations. The India-UK Roadmap 2030 prioritizes expanding these connections to enhance economic, diplomatic, and social ties. With over 1.9 million people of Indian origin in the UK²⁴, India's cultural influence continues to grow, shaping policies, business, and the arts. The roadmap focuses on education, mobility, arts, heritage, and tourism.

The Role of the Indian Diaspora

The Indian diaspora in the UK is among the largest and most influential ethnic communities, contributing significantly to politics, business, healthcare, and academia. Prominent Indian-origin leaders hold key positions in government, finance, and technology, reinforcing India-UK ties. There are an estimated 65,000 Indian-owned businesses in Britain, mainly in the healthcare, pharmaceuticals, technology, financial services, hospitality and real estate, and food and

²⁴UK Government. 2024. Population of England and Wales. Ethnicity Facts and Figures. <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest/>

beverage sectors, that grant employment to 180,000 people²⁵. The Indian diaspora in the country also sends significant remittances to India, amounting to GBP 3 billion in 2018²⁶. Diaspora-led initiatives like cultural festivals, business summits, and charities further strengthen relations.

Despite this strong presence, challenges such as visa restrictions, immigration policies, and concerns over post-Brexit economic uncertainties have impacted diaspora contributions. Addressing these concerns through pro-immigration policies, dual-degree programs, and work permit flexibility will ensure that the Indian diaspora continues to act as a bridge between the two nations.

Educational Collaboration and Student Mobility

Education is a key pillar of India-UK ties, with the UK being a top destination for Indian students. For example, Sir Venki Ramakrishnan, Nobel Laureate and fellow of Trinity college, Cambridge, is the first Indian ever to become President of the Royal society, a position held by many scientific greats including Sir Issaac Newton²⁷. The roadmap aims to increase academic partnerships, scholarships, and student mobility. Additionally, the partnership includes the UK-India Young Professionals Scheme, launched in 2023, which permits 3,000 Indian professionals annually to work in the UK for up to two years boosting enrollment. Notably, India is the first visa-national country to have such a programme with the UK²⁸. The India-UK Mutual Recognition of Qualifications (MRQs) simplifies credit transfers, research collaborations, and degree equivalences.

Despite this progress, challenges remain in affordability, visa policies, and scholarship accessibility, as many Indian students face financial constraints while studying in the UK. To enhance educational ties, both governments should focus on providing more joint research opportunities, launching exchange programs, and increasing funding for need-based scholarships.

Cultural Exchange and Soft Power Diplomacy

Cultural ties are fostered through Bollywood, music, literature, and heritage projects. Institutions like the British Council and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) promote artistic collaborations, language exchanges, and museum partnerships. The UK supports heritage restoration projects, including colonial-era landmarks. Initiatives like the UK-India Year of

25Bose, M. 2024. "UK Elections: How Indian Diaspora Has Helped Britain Become More Sensible Towards India." Firstpost, July 6. <https://www.firstpost.com/opinion/uk-elections-how-indian-diaspora-has-helped-britain-come-closer-to-india-13790147.html>

26UK in a Changing Europe. 2024. UK-India Relations. London: UK in a Changing Europe. <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/reports/uk-india-relations/>

27Bilimoria, Karan. 2017. "Inspiring Indian Students to Join the UK University: Poland Key to Long-Term Relationship." In *Winning Partnership: India-UK Relations Beyond Brexit*, edited by Manoj Ladwa, 120–122. London: India Inc. Group.

28High Commission of India, London. 2025. "About Young Professionals Scheme." Accessed January 8. <https://www.hcilondon.gov.in/page/about-young-professionals-scheme/>

Culture (2017) and the India-UK Cultural Exchange Program have strengthened cultural appreciation. However, some cultural sensitivities, including post-colonial historical narratives and debates on British museum artifacts of Indian origin, need to be addressed through inclusive dialogues and bilateral heritage agreements.

Tourism and Travel

Tourism is growing in India-UK relations, with rising business, leisure, and cultural travel. The UK is a popular destination for Indian tourists, while British visitors explore India's heritage sites, wellness retreats, and festivals. Both nations are simplifying visa procedures, promoting tourism partnerships, and easing travel regulations. E-visas for UK travelers and visa relaxations for Indian professionals encourage cross-border movement and engagement. However, challenges such as visa processing delays, high travel costs, and post-Brexit immigration uncertainties need to be resolved to fully realize the tourism potential between the two nations.

People-to-people ties and cultural exchanges are key to the India-UK partnership, strengthening mutual understanding and cooperation. The India-UK Roadmap 2030 emphasizes the role of the Indian diaspora, education, cultural diplomacy, and tourism in deepening these bonds. While progress has been made, challenges like visa policies and financial barriers remain. Addressing these issues through inclusive policies and community initiatives will ensure a thriving relationship built on shared history and mutual aspirations.

3.Challenges in India-UK Relations

Despite the ambitious India-UK Roadmap 2030, which aims to strengthen bilateral ties across multiple sectors, there are several challenges that continue to hinder the full realization of this vision. These challenges stem from historical tensions, policy disagreements, and evolving global geopolitical dynamics. While the two nations share strong trade, defense, and cultural ties, various obstacles—ranging from stalled trade negotiations to security concerns—pose significant hurdles to deeper cooperation.

3.1. Trade Negotiations and Economic Barriers

One of the most pressing challenges in India-UK economic relations is the prolonged negotiation of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which began in 2022. Key sticking points include tariff reductions, labor mobility, and market access. India seeks greater access to the UK's financial and services markets, while the UK is pushing for lower tariffs on its key exports such as automobiles and whiskey. Currently, bilateral trade stands at GBP 42 billion, and the balance is

in India's favour with Britain's trade deficit with India amounting to GBP 8.3 billion in 2023²⁹. Even so, the UK's trade with India accounts for only 2.4 percent of its total trade³⁰, highlighting the potential to scale up these figures. Another contentious issue is work visas for Indian professionals, with India advocating for relaxed immigration policies to facilitate service sector trade, while the UK remains cautious due to domestic labor market concerns.

Beyond the FTA, regulatory differences and investment barriers further complicate economic cooperation. The UK's post-Brexit economic restructuring has led to policy unpredictability, while India's bureaucratic hurdles and protectionist measures sometimes deter UK investors. Stricter financial regulations in the UK create operational challenges for Indian businesses, whereas India's foreign direct investment (FDI) restrictions make it difficult for British firms to expand in key sectors like manufacturing and food processing. Additionally, tariff and non-tariff barriers (NTBs) persist, with Indian exports to the UK facing stringent regulatory standards, while the UK's exports to India are affected by high tariff rates. India's labor-intensive exports, such as textiles and agriculture, also face competition due to the UK's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) scheme, which benefits rival economies like Bangladesh³¹. The absence of mutual recognition of qualifications (MRQs), strict visa regulations, and restrictions on cross-border data flow further limit collaboration in high-growth sectors like IT, pharmaceuticals, and financial services. Addressing these trade and investment barriers is essential for realizing the full potential of India-UK economic ties.

3.2. Geopolitical Divergences and Strategic Misalignment

Although India and the UK share a broad strategic vision, geopolitical differences sometimes create tensions in their partnership. One of the key issues is their differing approaches to China. While both nations recognize China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific, their policies have not always aligned. The UK, as part of its "Global Britain" strategy, has sought to balance economic engagement with China while also addressing security concerns. In effect, the UK's approach to China appears to be to "compete where necessary; cooperate where possible; counteract when necessary"³². In contrast, India sees China as a direct regional competitor and a security threat, particularly given the border tensions in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh.

Additionally, the Russia-Ukraine war has highlighted policy differences. The UK, in line with Western allies, has imposed strict sanctions on Russia, whereas India has maintained a neutral

²⁹The Geostrata. 2024. "India-UK Bilateral Relations." The Geostrata, February 29. <https://www.thegeostrata.com/post/india-uk-bilateral-relations>

³⁰Department for Business and Trade. India Trade and Investment Factsheet: 21 February 2025. GOV.UK. Released 21 February 2025.

³¹Rai, Durgesh K. 2022. India-UK Trade and Investment Relations: Challenges and Prospects. DPG Policy Report, Volume VII, Issue 11. New Delhi: Delhi Policy Group.

³²The Wire. 2025. "UK's Indo-Pacific Strategy: Balancing India, US, China, and Japan." February 24. <https://thewire.in/diplomacy/uk-indo-pacific-india-us-china-japan>

stance, continuing its trade relations with Moscow, particularly in the energy sector. This divergence has led to diplomatic frictions, as the UK urges India to take a stronger stance against Russia, while India prioritizes its strategic autonomy in foreign policy. Another area of concern is the UK's role in the Indo-Pacific region. While the UK has expressed a commitment to deeper engagement in the region, India remains skeptical about Britain's long-term strategic intent, given its historical disengagement from Asian geopolitics post-colonial era.

3.3. Security and Defense Cooperation: Limitations and Trust Deficits

Although defense ties have improved, there are limitations to security cooperation, particularly in defense technology transfer and arms trade. Over the past decade, only 3 percent of India's defence acquisitions came from the UK³³. India has pushed for greater participation in the Make in India initiative, seeking joint production and technology-sharing agreements with UK defense companies. However, the UK has been cautious in transferring critical military technologies, partly due to its export control policies and security concerns.

Counterterrorism cooperation also faces hurdles especially with regard to Afghanistan- Pakistan ('AfPak') region. Both India and the UK have suffered as a result of the unstable security environment in Afghanistan and the 'safe havens' and sustained and provided by Pakistan to the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani network. As a result, they have a shared interest in ensuring the future stability and security of Afghanistan³⁴. India has repeatedly urged the UK to take a stronger stance against Pakistan-based terrorist groups, but the UK, balancing its diplomatic relations with Islamabad, has been reluctant to take hard measures. This difference has at times caused friction in intelligence-sharing efforts between the two nations.

Furthermore, cyber security cooperation remains underdeveloped, despite the increasing threats of cyber attacks, digital espionage, and data security breaches. While both countries have acknowledged the need for closer collaboration in cyber defense, concrete frameworks for cooperation remain limited.

3.4. Political Sensitivities and Diaspora Issues

The Indian diaspora in the UK, which is over 1.9 million strong, plays a crucial role in shaping bilateral ties. However, certain political and social issues related to the diaspora have created tensions. One of the most controversial topics is the Khalistan movement, a separatist movement

³³IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies). 2023. "India's Defence-Industrial Partnership with the UK." IISS, November. <https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/2023/indias-defence-industrial-partnership-with-the-uk/>

³⁴Roy-Chaudhury, Rahul. 2011. "Shared Interest in AfPak Issues and Counter-Terrorism." In *Reconnecting Britain and India: Ideas for an Enhanced Partnership*, edited by Jo Johnson and Rajiv Kumar, 113–125. New Delhi: Academic Foundation

advocating for an independent Sikh State³⁵. While the movement has minimal support in India, some pro-Khalistan elements in the UK have been active in organizing protests and lobbying British politicians. India has expressed concern over these activities, urging the UK government to take stronger action, but the UK, citing freedom of speech and democratic rights, has been hesitant to intervene³⁶.

Also debates in the UK Parliament regarding Kashmir have occasionally led to diplomatic tensions between the UK and India. In September 2021, members of the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Kashmir tabled a motion titled "Human Rights in Kashmir" for debate in the House of Commons³⁷. This session drew a strong reaction from India, which condemned the language used by some MPs and emphasized that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India. The Indian High Commission in London expressed dismay, stating that assertions made in such forums should be substantiated with authentic, verifiable facts.

Similarly, in January 2021, a debate in the UK Parliament focused on the "political situation in Kashmir." The Indian High Commission criticized the discussion, noting that certain parliamentarians relied on "false assertions" and unsubstantiated allegations propagated by a "third country," implicitly referring to Pakistan. The High Commission reiterated that Jammu and Kashmir is an internal matter of India and highlighted the region's progress towards good governance and accelerated development since its administrative reorganization in August 2019³⁸. These parliamentary debates have often led to diplomatic protests from India, which maintains that such discussions can adversely impact bilateral relations. While UK parliamentarians may engage in these debates out of concern for global human rights, India often perceives them as unwarranted intrusions into its domestic matters, leading to diplomatic strains between the two countries.

3.5. Post-Brexit Uncertainties and the Changing Global Order

The UK's exit from the European Union has introduced uncertainties in its global trade and foreign policy strategies, which in turn have affected India-UK relations. While Brexit has created opportunities for deeper economic cooperation, it has also led to shifts in UK trade priorities, with London seeking stronger ties with the United States, the Commonwealth, and the Indo-Pacific. This shifting focus has at times delayed progress on India-related commitments.

35Statecraft. 2023. "Pro-Khalistan Movement Stoking Division within British Sikh Community: UK Report." Statecraft, April 27. <https://www.statecraft.co.in/article/pro-khalistan-movement-stoking-division-within-british-sikh-community-uk-report>

36Shah, Kriti M. 2022. "Attempted Revival of the Khalistan Movement Abroad: Challenges to Indian Diplomacy." *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 17, nos. 1–2 (January–June): 75–87.

37UK Parliament. 2021. "Commons Chamber Debate: Human Rights in Kashmir." Hansard, September 23. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-09-Commons23/debates/f3c8cc5b-86cd-4aff-a380-ed05a9369fbb/CommonsChamber>

38UK Parliament. 2021. Political Situation in Kashmir: Debate Pack. House of Library, January. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2021-0153>

Additionally, global economic slowdowns, supply chain disruptions, and energy crises have forced both countries to prioritize domestic economic policies, sometimes at the expense of bilateral trade ambitions. As a result, certain trade and investment initiatives under the India-UK Roadmap 2030 have seen slower-than-expected progress.

Despite these challenges, India and the UK remain committed to deepening their strategic partnership. While trade negotiations, security cooperation, and political differences continue to pose hurdles, both nations recognize the importance of their historical ties and shared global interests. Addressing these challenges requires strong political will, diplomatic flexibility, and a pragmatic approach to policy alignment.

4. The Future of India-UK Relations Beyond 2030

As the India-UK Roadmap 2030 nears completion, the future of UK-India relations will depend on how both nations navigate geopolitical shifts, economic realignments, and technological advancements. Beyond 2030, their partnership could take multiple directions, from deeper strategic cooperation to potential stagnation amid global uncertainties.

This section explores possible future scenarios for UK-India relations and outlines strategic pathways to strengthen their ties. By addressing key challenges and seizing new opportunities, both nations can ensure a resilient and forward-looking partnership in the decades ahead.

4.1. Possible Future Scenarios for India-UK Relations Beyond 2030

The trajectory of India-UK relations beyond 2030 will be shaped by evolving geopolitical dynamics, economic shifts, and strategic interests. While the India-UK Roadmap 2030 provides a strong foundation, future developments will be influenced by factors such as global trade realignments, regional security concerns, and domestic political changes in both nations. Considering these uncertainties, three possible scenarios emerge: (1) A Strengthened Strategic Partnership, (2) Economic Integration with Geopolitical Divergence, and (3) A Stagnated Partnership Amid Global Uncertainty. These scenarios will serve as a framework to analyze potential outcomes and help both nations take proactive measures to secure their long-term relationship.

Scenario 1: A Strengthened Strategic Partnership (Best-Case Scenario)

In the most optimistic scenario, India and the UK emerge as key global partners, expanding cooperation in trade, security, technology, and climate action. By successfully implementing the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), bilateral trade surpasses expectations, facilitating deeper economic integration. India benefits from UK investments in high-value sectors like artificial

intelligence (AI), green energy, and financial services, while the UK gains market access to India's rapidly growing economy. Regulatory challenges such as non-tariff barriers (NTBs) and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) disputes are effectively resolved through a structured FTA Review Mechanism.

On the strategic front, India and the UK solidify their defense and security partnership, establishing a permanent Indo-Pacific security framework. The UK increases its naval presence in the region, participating in joint military operations with India, Japan, and Australia. Intelligence-sharing agreements are expanded to address global security threats, including terrorism, cyber warfare, and hybrid warfare tactics. India and the UK also take a leadership role in global governance, working closely in multilateral institutions such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), G20, and Commonwealth to shape international policy on trade, climate change, and technology governance.

Furthermore, collaboration in science, technology, and healthcare reaches new heights. The UK-India Tech Partnership evolves into a long-term joint innovation hub, focusing on quantum computing, space exploration, and biotechnology. In healthcare, joint research in genomics, vaccine development, and AI-driven diagnostics leads to breakthroughs in global disease prevention. Additionally, migration policies are streamlined, allowing seamless student exchanges and skilled professional mobility. By 2040, India and the UK are seen as trusted global allies, leveraging their shared values and complementary strengths to drive economic growth and geopolitical stability.

Scenario 2: Economic Integration with Geopolitical Divergence (Middle-Ground Scenario)

In this scenario, economic cooperation between India and the UK remains strong, but geopolitical challenges prevent full alignment on foreign policy and security matters. The FTA is implemented successfully, resulting in increased trade volumes and investment flows. However, unresolved regulatory issues, such as India's evolving digital trade laws and UK's visa policies, create hurdles in fully realizing the agreement's potential. While sectors like financial services, pharmaceuticals, and renewable energy witness significant growth, newer industries such as defense manufacturing and AI face restrictions due to political and regulatory concerns.

On the strategic front, UK engagement in the Indo-Pacific remains limited, with its foreign policy balancing between economic interests in China and security cooperation with India. While the UK continues participating in defense dialogues and military exercises, its reluctance to take strong positions on regional security challenges—such as China's assertiveness in the South China Sea—prevents deeper strategic convergence with India. Additionally, differences in counterterrorism policies emerge, with the UK's diplomatic stance towards Pakistan-based terror groups causing periodic friction in bilateral security cooperation.

While scientific and technological collaboration continues, funding constraints and Brexit-related budgetary shifts reduce the scope of UK investments in Indian research and development projects. Student mobility remains stable, but tightening UK migration policies lead to restrictions on Indian professionals in certain sectors. People-to-people ties persist, but limited cultural collaborations and restrictive visa policies slow the expansion of bilateral engagement.

Although India and the UK maintain a strong economic relationship, the lack of full alignment in geopolitical and security strategies leads to a moderately cooperative partnership, where economic pragmatism drives the relationship while strategic disagreements prevent deeper global coordination.

Scenario 3: A Stagnated Partnership Amid Global Uncertainty (Worst-Case Scenario)

In the most pessimistic scenario, India-UK relations face stagnation due to unresolved trade disputes, geopolitical tensions, and external pressures. Despite initial optimism surrounding the FTA, unresolved tariff and non-tariff barriers, data protection laws, and regulatory misalignments lead to declining investor confidence. Trade volumes fail to grow as expected, and economic collaboration remains limited to traditional sectors such as pharmaceuticals and IT, with little expansion into emerging industries.

Strategically, the UK's post-Brexit foreign policy shifts towards the EU and China, leading to reduced engagement with India on security issues. The UK's diplomatic stance on Pakistan-based terrorism, coupled with its reluctance to fully align with India's Indo-Pacific security concerns, creates tensions in bilateral defense relations. Intelligence-sharing agreements weaken due to differences in counterterrorism strategies, and joint military exercises decline. The absence of a clear strategic roadmap results in missed opportunities for cooperation in global governance.

Scientific and technological collaborations suffer due to a lack of policy alignment. The UK-India Tech Partnership weakens, and investments in joint research projects decline. Stricter UK visa policies discourage Indian students and professionals from seeking opportunities in Britain, causing a sharp decline in educational and cultural exchanges. Indian businesses shift their focus towards other global markets, reducing the UK's role in India's economic growth strategy.

This scenario leaves India and the UK in a stagnated partnership, where bureaucratic hurdles, diplomatic disagreements, and external geopolitical pressures prevent meaningful progress. If proactive steps are not taken, both nations risk missing out on the opportunity to build a resilient and forward-looking partnership that aligns with 21st-century global challenges.

4.2. Strategic Pathways for Strengthening India-UK Relations Beyond 2030

To build a stronger, future-ready partnership, India and the UK must adopt strategic pathways that enhance cooperation across trade, security, technology, climate action, and people-to-people ties. Addressing economic barriers, geopolitical challenges, and regulatory hurdles will be key to sustaining long-term collaboration.

This section outlines concrete measures to expand trade, deepen defense ties, foster innovation, and strengthen cultural exchanges, ensuring that UK-India relations remain adaptive, resilient, and mutually beneficial in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

Strengthening Strategic Autonomy and Global Cooperation

By 2030, India is expected to be among the top three economies globally, while the UK will continue redefining its post-Brexit global role. Beyond 2030, India's foreign policy is likely to remain multipolar, balancing relationships with the US, EU, Russia, and China. The UK, on the other hand, will continue to navigate its post-Brexit global realignment. To maintain a mutually beneficial partnership, India and the UK must enhance coordination on global security issues, particularly in Indo-Pacific stability, cyber threats, and counterterrorism. Both countries should also focus on expanding defense manufacturing and technology transfers under India's Make in India initiative, ensuring self-reliance in critical defense sectors. Additionally, establishing a high-level strategic dialogue will help align bilateral relations with evolving geopolitical realities. Active engagement in multilateral forums such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), G20, Commonwealth, and G7 will provide India and the UK with platforms to influence global governance effectively, reinforcing their joint leadership in international affairs.

Expanding Economic and Trade Partnerships

The proposed India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) presents a crucial opportunity to strengthen bilateral trade and investment by addressing existing challenges and expanding cooperation in emerging sectors. While the FTA is expected to be finalized before 2030, the long-term focus should be on sectoral diversification, investment facilitation, and digital trade integration. Trade expansion must go beyond traditional industries such as pharmaceuticals, IT, and financial services to include high-growth sectors like green technology, artificial intelligence (AI), and quantum computing. Additionally, strengthening fintech partnerships, enhancing digital economy frameworks, and ensuring smoother cross-border payments will be essential for deepening financial integration.

Several regulatory challenges need to be addressed to unlock the full potential of India-UK trade relations. Issues related to Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in the promotion of generic medicines and financial services remain significant concerns. India's stringent Customs Administration of Rules of Origin and its evolving digital regulations have also raised concerns for the UK, affecting market access and regulatory compliance. Establishing institutional

mechanisms within the FTA to tackle non-tariff barriers (NTBs), streamline investment processes, and harmonize regulatory standards can create a more predictable and business-friendly environment for investors from both nations.

As the UK reshapes its trade policies post-Brexit, it can play a key role in supporting Indian businesses in expanding their presence in the British market, particularly in services and high-value manufacturing. In return, India can encourage greater UK investment in its infrastructure, smart cities, and industrial corridors, aligning with its economic modernization goals. Additionally, the increasing presence of the Indian diaspora in the UK offers opportunities for collaboration in cultural, creative, and service industries.

Looking ahead, India and the UK must develop a long-term trade and investment roadmap that ensures policy stability and mutual growth. Strengthening bilateral ties will not only provide stability in an uncertain global economic environment but also open new market opportunities. By leveraging their complementary strengths and addressing existing trade barriers, both countries can enhance their strategic partnership, fostering sustained economic growth and shared prosperity in the coming decades.

Strengthening India-UK Defense and Security Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific

As the Indo-Pacific continues to be a key geopolitical hotspot beyond 2030, India and the UK should work towards deepening their defense and security cooperation to ensure regional stability and a rules-based maritime order. To achieve this, India and the UK should actively engage in trilateral and multilateral security alliances with countries such as Japan, Australia, and France. Strengthening these partnerships could help counterbalance growing regional challenges, particularly China's increasing assertiveness in the region. Collaborative military exercises, coordinated maritime patrols, and joint defense dialogues would strengthen interoperability between partner nations and reinforce shared security objectives.

Greater sharing of intelligence to prevent deter, and disrupt terror attacks on India and the UK should take place³⁹. To effectively address global security threats, India and the UK should expand intelligence-sharing mechanisms and joint counter-terrorism operations. Both nations should work towards establishing a structured intelligence-sharing agreement, facilitating real-time information exchange on terrorist threats, cyber-attacks, and maritime security risks. Additionally, both governments should increase collaboration in monitoring and countering terrorist financing and radicalization. The UK could take a firmer stance against Pakistan-based terrorist groups, ensuring that its policies align with India's security concerns. The existing

³⁹Roy-Chaudhury, Rahul. 2017. "India and the UK: Post-Brexit Security and Defence Cooperation." In *Winning Partnership: India-UK Relations Beyond Brexit*, edited by Manoj Ladwa, 49–60. India INC.

India-UK 2+2 Foreign and Defence Dialogue should be upgraded to a formalized annual security summit, fostering deeper engagement at the ministerial level.

Looking ahead, India and the UK should work towards formalizing a structured Indo-Pacific security framework by 2030. This framework should focus on key areas such as maritime security, cyber defense, space security, and disaster response. A joint India-UK Indo-Pacific Security Task Force could be created to coordinate strategic priorities, ensure alignment with regional allies, and enhance military coordination in the region. Additionally, the UK should increase its naval presence in the Indo-Pacific, participating in joint maritime exercises and freedom of navigation operations to deter security threats.

India and the UK are prioritizing long-term defense technology collaboration, particularly in the co-development and co-production of advanced weapon systems. By 2030, both nations aim to expand their partnership under initiatives such as Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliance) programs, focusing on next-generation fighter jet engines, naval propulsion systems, and AI-driven defense technologies. The UK is expected to play a greater role in India's defense modernization efforts by facilitating technology transfers and easing export restrictions on critical military equipment. Additionally, a dedicated India-UK Defense Technology and Industrial Partnership Forum could be established to promote sustained dialogue and innovation in defense production. A key area of collaboration is military jet engine development, with India engaging international partners, including the UK's Rolls-Royce, to co-develop indigenous jet engines for future fighter aircraft. This initiative is expected to enhance India's defense manufacturing capabilities and reduce dependency on imports, strengthening the country's indigenous defense industry while deepening UK-India strategic ties.

Leading Climate Action and Green Transition Efforts

Beyond 2030, climate action will remain a top global priority, requiring India and the UK to enhance cooperation on sustainable development. Both countries should focus on expanding renewable energy initiatives, particularly in solar, wind, and hydrogen power technologies. Collaborative efforts in sustainable urban development will help integrate smart cities with green transportation and carbon-neutral policies. Joint initiatives in climate resilience should ensure sustainable agriculture, water conservation, and disaster mitigation strategies to combat the effects of climate change. The India-UK Green Growth Partnership must be expanded beyond 2030 to include innovative financing mechanisms for green projects, positioning both countries as global leaders in sustainability and climate diplomacy.

Advancing Healthcare , Science, and Technology Collaboration

The next phase of India-UK cooperation in healthcare should emphasize joint research in biotechnology, genomics, and AI-driven medical solutions to improve patient care and

accessibility. Efforts should focus on vaccine development, drug discovery, and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) research, alongside increased investments in pandemic preparedness and next-generation pharmaceuticals.

In science and technology, emphasis should be placed on AI, space technology, and clean energy innovation, fostering deeper collaboration between leading universities and private sectors. The UK-India Tech Partnership should be expanded to include greater cooperation in healthtech, educational technology, and smart infrastructure. Institutionalizing research and innovation networks will enable both countries to position themselves as global leaders in science-driven economic growth, strengthening their technological edge in a competitive global environment.

Strengthening Cultural, Educational, and People-to-People Ties

The India-UK Roadmap 2030 envisions a future where cultural, educational, and people-to-people ties play a crucial role in strengthening bilateral relations. Beyond 2030, further deepening of these ties will require enhanced student and academic mobility, active engagement with the Indian diaspora, expanded cultural collaborations, and progressive migration policies. Strengthening educational ties through increased scholarships, visa facilitation, and research collaborations will be key. Expanding initiatives like the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI)⁴⁰ and creating more joint degree programs between institutions such as Oxford, Cambridge, IITs, and IIMs will foster greater academic cooperation. Additionally, simplifying visa regulations for students and researchers, along with post-study work opportunities like the UK Graduate Route, will encourage intellectual exchange and mobility between both countries.

The Indian diaspora in the UK, which comprises nearly 1.8 million people, plays a vital role in economic, political, and cultural engagements. Leveraging this community strategically will strengthen bilateral ties through economic contributions, cultural initiatives, and policy influence. Organizations like the British Asian Trust and Indo-British APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group) can facilitate business collaborations, heritage preservation projects, and social initiatives. With greater representation in British politics, the Indian-origin community can also advocate for policies that benefit trade agreements, migration frameworks, and educational exchanges between the two nations.

Expanding media, arts, and cultural collaborations will further deepen mutual understanding. Strengthening Bollywood-British film co-productions under the India-UK Audio-Visual Agreement, increasing participation in international film festivals such as the BFI London Film Festival, and promoting heritage tourism initiatives will reinforce cultural ties. Programs like the

⁴⁰British Council. 2023. "The UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI)." Last modified December 9, 2023. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/he-science/opportunities/uk-india-education-research-initiative>

"Incredible India" campaign in the UK and reciprocal British tourism promotions in India can attract more visitors and cultural enthusiasts. Additionally, literary festivals, including the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) London edition, along with art and theatre exchanges, can further promote cross-cultural engagement.

To sustain long-term collaboration, flexible migration policies will be essential. Beyond 2030, reforms should include simplified visa processing for students, skilled professionals, and entrepreneurs. The UK-India Young Professionals Scheme, which allows young Indians to work in the UK for two years, should be expanded to enhance knowledge transfer in key sectors. Entrepreneurial collaborations should also be encouraged through initiatives like the UK-India Start-up Fund, enabling Indian entrepreneurs to establish businesses in the UK and vice versa. These measures will ensure a steady flow of talent and innovation between the two countries.

In conclusion, the future of the India-UK partnership beyond 2030 depends on a strong foundation of cultural, educational, and people-to-people ties. By enhancing academic cooperation, engaging the Indian diaspora, promoting cultural diplomacy, and ensuring progressive migration policies, both nations can build a robust and mutually beneficial relationship. These efforts will not only strengthen economic and strategic partnerships but also foster a shared understanding of history, values, and cultural heritage.

5. Conclusion

The India-UK Roadmap 2030 represents a transformative step in strengthening bilateral relations by fostering deep cooperation across key sectors, including trade, security, climate action, health, technology, and cultural exchanges. This strategic framework provides a structured and forward-looking approach to addressing shared challenges and harnessing new opportunities in a rapidly evolving global order. Over the past decades, India and the UK have transitioned from historical complexities to a dynamic and multifaceted partnership, guided by mutual economic interests, geopolitical imperatives, and people-to-people ties. However, while the roadmap lays a strong foundation for cooperation until 2030, its long-term success depends on overcoming persistent challenges and adapting to future geopolitical and economic realities.

One of the most crucial aspects of the roadmap is its emphasis on a free and fair trade agreement (FTA), which has the potential to unlock new investment opportunities, reduce trade barriers, and expand economic partnerships in key sectors such as technology, pharmaceuticals, fintech, and renewable energy. However, unresolved trade disputes, concerns over market access, and regulatory divergences pose significant obstacles that both nations must navigate with flexibility and strategic foresight. Similarly, in the security and defense sector, deeper cooperation in maritime security, counter-terrorism, cyber security, and defense technology is essential,

particularly in the context of Indo-Pacific stability and global security challenges. Yet, geopolitical misalignments and strategic hesitations could slow progress, making trust-building and institutionalized defense collaboration crucial for long-term success.

Beyond economic and security dimensions, the roadmap envisions India and the UK as global leaders in climate action and sustainable development, particularly through joint commitments under COP26 and beyond. By advancing renewable energy cooperation, green finance, and sustainable urban development, both nations can position themselves as key players in the global transition towards a low-carbon economy. Likewise, in the health and innovation sector, collaborative research in biotechnology, digital healthcare, and artificial intelligence offers immense potential, particularly in post-pandemic resilience and global health security.

However, the true test of the India-UK partnership will extend beyond 2030, requiring both nations to adapt to emerging global trends and recalibrate their strategies accordingly. The study of possible future scenarios highlights three distinct trajectories—one in which the partnership deepens into a highly institutionalized, strategic alliance, another where relations stagnate due to geopolitical divergences, and a third where both countries pursue flexible, issue-based cooperation in a multipolar world. Given these possibilities, strategic pathways must be designed to institutionalize cooperation and build long-term resilience in India-UK relations. These include expanding economic and trade partnerships, strengthening defense and security ties in the Indo-Pacific, leading climate action, advancing healthcare and technology collaboration, and reinforcing cultural and educational exchanges.

As global power dynamics shift and new economic and security challenges emerge, India and the UK must ensure that their bilateral engagement moves beyond transactional ties towards a comprehensive and future-ready partnership. The roadmap to 2030 should not be seen as an end goal but rather as a dynamic framework that evolves in response to changing global realities. By institutionalizing strategic cooperation, maintaining flexibility in policy alignment, and fostering mutual trust, India and the UK can solidify their partnership well into the next decade and beyond, ensuring that it remains resilient, adaptive, and mutually beneficial in an era of geopolitical uncertainty.

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