

## Side-stepping irritants: On India-U.K. ties

The article is related to  
General Studies-Paper-II  
(International Relations)

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### India and the U.K. chose to keep the big picture in mind and work on long-term goals.

After two last-minute cancellations due to waves of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2021, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was in Delhi last week, committing to more cooperation with India on trade, defence, combating climate change and cyber security.

But it was a visit surprisingly short on actual agreements. While an early harvest agreement on trade had to be shelved — the plan was to announce it by Easter (April) this year — Mr. Johnson and Prime Minister Narendra Modi said they have pushed a deadline to complete the full FTA by October-end or Deepavali, with a view to doubling bilateral trade by 2030.

It is not clear whether the respective trade delegations are on track for the final agreement, but Mr. Johnson sounded optimistic, with India fast-tracking its FTAs with the UAE and Australia. Of concern to the U.K. is the lifting of Indian tariffs on Scotch whisky, which might make some headway, as India has accepted lower tariffs on Australian wine and the U.K. seems more flexible in increasing visas to Indian professionals.

Both Prime Ministers discussed strengthening defence ties and cooperating strategically in the Indo-Pacific. The two leaders also discussed green technology transfers and international climate finance, although India has yet to commit in writing to the Nationally Determined Contributions that Mr. Modi had described at COP26 in Glasgow.

Mr. Johnson did tread lightly on issues that the Modi government is sensitive about, such as Ukraine and human rights violations. He referred to India's long-standing relationship with Russia, expressing understanding of India's position, in stark contrast to the visit of his Foreign Minister two weeks ago. He brushed aside a question on human rights concerns in India, despite facing criticism over posing with a bulldozer while inaugurating a factory on the same day the Supreme Court of India was deliberating over the Government's controversial new policy of using bulldozers to demolish shops and homes.

A sub-group is to be set up to study "extremism" inside India and the U.K., which Mr. Johnson suggested would be used to monitor Khalistani groups (as New Delhi desires), but has a broader mandate to counter all groups and individuals "seeking to incite violent extremism and terrorism". In return, New Delhi chose not to press the point too hard on why economic fugitives (Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi) have still not been extradited.

However, while side-stepping irritants in the relationship can increase the prospects for agreements, it cannot replace the actual work and elbow-grease needed to give ties some momentum after years of stasis.

Both New Delhi and London must ensure more concerted efforts to bring those agreements to a finale in the near future, to reach their ambitious goals under “Roadmap 2030” agreed to at the last summit in 2021.

## **GS World Team Input**

### **\*IN THE NEWS\***

#### **What is a Free Trade Agreement?**

- Free trade agreements are used to facilitate trade between countries.
- Free trade agreements (FTAs) are arrangements between two or more countries or trading blocs that agree to reduce or eliminate customs duty and non-tariff barriers primarily on substantial trade between them.
- FTAs generally cover trade in goods (such as agricultural or industrial products) or trade in services (such as banking, manufacturing, trading, etc.).
- FTAs may also cover other areas such as intellectual property rights (IPR), investments, government procurement and competition policy, etc.
- Under FTA, customs duties, regulatory laws, subsidies and quotas etc. are simplified on the products under import-export between two countries. A big advantage of this is that the cost of production of the two countries between which this agreement is made becomes cheaper than the rest of the countries. This helps in increasing the business and gives impetus to the economy.

#### **What is the India-UK Roadmap 2030?**

- This roadmap outlines the ambitions of the partnership between the two countries over the next ten years.
- The roadmap introduces an 'enhanced trade partnership' between India and the United Kingdom, with the goal of doubling the value of UK-India trade by 2030 and accelerating the first phase of pre-negotiations for a future free trade deal.
- This is the first agreement since the formal 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' agreement in 2005.
- The two countries have agreed on a new collaboration on Maritime Domain Awareness. These include new agreements on maritime information sharing and invitations to join India's Information Fusion Centre in Gurgaon.
- Both the countries are working on the Logistics Memorandum of Understanding.
- The two countries have agreed to build on government-to-government cooperation on India's future fighter aircraft requirement.
- They have also agreed to strengthen cooperation in the United Nations Security Council, G20, UNFCCC, WTO, IMF, World Bank etc.
- They have agreed to promote Track 5 and Track 2 dialogue between think tanks of the countries. At the same time, they will promote engagement in the Indian Ocean Rim Association framework.

## Expected Question (Prelims Exams)

**Q. Consider the following statements in the context of India-UK Roadmap 2030:-**

1. This roadmap outlines the ambitions of the partnership between the two countries over the next ten years.
2. Recently (2022) Australia is also associated along with India and Britain in this roadmap 2030.
3. Under this, the UK-India Young Entrepreneurship Forum will be launched.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are not correct?

- (a) 1 only                      (b) 2 only  
(c) 1 and 3                      (d) 2 and 3

## Expected Question (Mains Exams)

**Q. India-Britain needs to recognise the lack of harmony between different strands of the relationship. While mentioning the challenges prevailing in India-UK relations, suggest measures to solve them. (250 Words)**

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**Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC main examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.**