

MP-IDSA *Issue Brief*

Defence Contours of India-UK Vision 2035: Opportunities and Challenges

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Summary

India and the UK launched the Vision 2035, which includes a 10-year Defence Industrial Roadmap focused on co-design, co-development, and co-production of advanced technologies. The roadmap highlights collaboration in jet engines, naval propulsion, underwater systems, and directed-energy weapons, reflecting a shift from buyer-seller ties to joint innovation. Vision 2035 signals a durable framework for deepened strategic and industrial cooperation.

Introduction

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK), Keir Starmer, on 24 July 2025, signed the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) and launched the India-UK Vision 2035 during the visit of Prime Minister Modi to London. The launch marks a pivotal step in elevating the bilateral Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP), under the guiding philosophy of BRISK (Business, Research, Innovation, Science and Technology, and Knowledge).¹ The vision has provisions for regular Prime Ministerial engagement and annual implementation reviews at the Foreign Minister level. Central to this vision is the finalisation of the defence industrial roadmap, aimed at fostering joint efforts in co-design, co-development, and co-production of defence technologies. These collaborative efforts are intended to meet the growing defence requirements of both nations while also addressing global market demands.

The growing imperative for European nations to ramp up defence expenditure, particularly in response to the Ukrainian conflict, has compelled major powers to reassess their strategic alignments and increase their defence expenditure while reducing overdependence on traditional partners. This shift coincides with the UK's broader post-Brexit realignment, whereas India continues to pursue greater self-reliance and expand its footprint in global defence exports. The National Security Strategy of the UK, released in early 2025,² referred to the UK's interest in building a concrete strategic partnership with India. This was reciprocated by PM Modi while referring to India's “commitment to building a ‘high-scoring solid partnership’” with the UK.³

India's growing engagement with the UK reflects its broader policy of diversifying defence partnerships. Launching a 10-year Defence Industrial Roadmap aims to deepen bilateral cooperation through joint research, technology co-development, and enhanced interoperability.⁴ The roadmap prioritises co-development, collaborative research, and innovation in defence technologies, emphasising supply chain resilience, manufacturing of advanced weapons, jet and naval propulsion systems, and improved operational readiness across domains.⁵ Against this backdrop, this Brief examines the defence dimension of Vision 2035, situating it

¹ [“India-UK Vision 2035”](#), Press Information Bureau, 24 July 2025.

² HM Government, [“National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World”](#), Government of the United Kingdom, June 2025.

³ Chietigj Bajpae, [“Modi Visit Marks Elevation of India-UK Relationship, but Risks and Ambiguities Remain”](#), Chatham House, 25 July 2025.

⁴ [“Prime Minister Meets Prime Minister of the United Kingdom \(July 24, 2025\)”](#), Press Information Bureau, 24 July 2025.

⁵ Huma Siddiqui, [“India-UK Vision 2035: Paving Way for Strategic Ties in Technology and Defence”](#), *Bharat Shakti*, 25 July 2025.

within the historical evolution of bilateral ties, analysing its key components and strategic significance, and identifying the challenges that could affect its implementation.

Historical Evolution of India–UK Defence Cooperation

The India–UK defence engagement is deeply rooted in historical linkages and encompasses joint training and operational interoperability today. As a result, both countries have regular bilateral exercises across domains: Ajeya Warrior (Army, since 2005), Konkan (Navy, since 2004), and Indradhanush (Air Force, since 2006), which have strengthened mutual familiarity in battalion-level drills, ship manoeuvres, and air-to-air operations.⁶ The 2015 Defence and International Security Partnership (DISP) institutionalised high-level dialogue and exchange mechanisms.⁷ Consequently, the 2019 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Defence Technology and Industrial Capacity Cooperation and the 2021 Roadmap 2030 underscored defence collaboration as a central pillar of the bilateral partnership.⁸

Subsequently, in 2022, the UK included India in its Open General Export License (OGEL) regime, facilitating access to niche and dual-use technologies.⁹ By early 2024, a Letter of Arrangement (LoA) was signed between India’s Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the UK’s Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL), strengthening cooperation in research in advanced technologies.¹⁰ Later that year, the UK–India Technology Security Initiative (TSI) was launched, targeting collaboration in critical technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), quantum computing, and semiconductors.¹¹

The UK’s ‘tilt’ to the Indo-Pacific (cited in the Integrated Review 2021¹² and its 2023 Refresh¹³) and India’s growing strategic assertiveness provided the impetus for Vision 2035. Preceding markers included the Royal Navy’s Carrier Strike Group visit to India

⁶ Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, [“Boosting India-UK Defence And Military Ties: New Thinking And Emerging Opportunities”](#), International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), 5 February 2020.

⁷ [“Defence and International Security Partnership”](#), Press Information Bureau, 12 November 2015.

⁸ [“Roadmap 2030 for India-UK Future Relations launched during India-UK Virtual Summit”](#), Press Information Bureau, 4 May 2021.

⁹ Richard McCallum, [“UK Defence a Key Partner for Viksit Bharat 2047”](#), *Hindustan Times*, 27 September 2024.

¹⁰ [“Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh Holds Talks with UK Defence Minister Mr Grant Shapps in London”](#), Press Information Bureau, 9 January 2024.

¹¹ [“The UK-India Technology Security Initiative”](#), Press Information Bureau, 24 July 2024.

¹² HM Government, [“Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy”](#), Government of the United Kingdom, 16 March 2021.

¹³ HM Government, [“Integrated Review Refresh 2023 Responding to a More Contested and Volatile World”](#), Government of the United Kingdom, 13 March 2023.

in 2021 and the 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Dialogue initiation in 2023.¹⁴ These developments collectively underscored the need for a roadmap with binding and measurable commitments, culminating in Vision 2035.

Defence Dimension of Vision 2035

India and the UK launched the Defence Partnership–India (DP-I) during the 2025 Aero India event, which marked a significant step in institutionalising bilateral defence cooperation.¹⁵ Building on this framework, both countries have expanded collaboration in the Defence Industrial Roadmap, launched during PM Modi’s 2025 visit to London. The ten-year industrial roadmap establishes a time-bound agreement of deeper collaborations in ‘jet engine technologies, maritime security, underwater systems and direct energy weapons.’¹⁶

Rolls-Royce has offered co-production and technology transfer under the Jet Engine Advanced Core Technologies (JEACT) initiative, including full intellectual property sharing commitments. This marks a historic shift toward autonomy in aero-engine technologies, complementing India’s parallel GE F-414 agreement with the United States.¹⁷ For India, this diversification helps lessen reliance on any partner for its fifth-generation stealth fighter programme, the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA). The project was evaluating three leading contenders for engine collaboration - General Electric (US), Rolls-Royce (UK), and Safran (France). Notably, France and the US already rank as India’s second and third-largest defence suppliers after Russia.¹⁸ On 22 August 2025, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh announced that India will collaborate with Safran to co-produce the advanced jet engines.¹⁹

Apart from jet engine technology, the UK’s Martin-Baker maintains and manufactures ejection seats for the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Mk-1A fighters. The company is also negotiating with the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) to supply ejection seats for the LCA Mk2, the AMCA, and the Twin-Engine Deck-Based Fighter (TEDBF).

¹⁴ [“Inaugural India-UK 2+2 Foreign and Defence Dialogue”](#), Press Information Bureau, 16 October 2023.

¹⁵ [“UK-India defence agreements boost ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ ambition”](#), British Deputy High Commission Bengaluru, Government of the United Kingdom, 10 February 2025.

¹⁶ Dhirendra Kumar, [“India, UK Set Wide-Ranging Strategic Course With Vision 2035 Roadmap”](#), *LiveMint*, 24 July 2025.

¹⁷ [“Strategic Shift beyond US India Seeks New Allies for Next-gen Fighter Jets”](#), *The Times of India*, 30 May 2025.

¹⁸ John Reed and Sylvia Pfeifer, [“The Battle to Build India’s Military Jet Engines”](#), *The Financial Times*, 9 October 2024.

¹⁹ [“India’s Next Leap is Fifth-Generation Fighter Jets with Home-Built Engines”](#), *The Economic Times*, 22 August 2025.

During the 2025 Aero India event, Thales (UK) and Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) signed a contract to deliver Laser Beam Riding MANPADS (LBRM), beginning with STARStreak high-velocity missiles and launchers.²⁰ The agreement includes plans to co-develop Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LMM) and integrate the Indian industry into 'Thales' global supply chain. Parallel efforts by MBDA UK and BDL have established an Advanced Short-Range Air-to-Air Missile (ASRAAM) assembly and testing facility in Hyderabad.²¹ This facility strengthens India's fighter fleet and positions India as an exporter of precision munitions. These ventures illustrate the shift from buyer-seller dynamics toward collaborative production ecosystems.

The maritime domain has emerged as another pillar of bilateral defence cooperation. A Statement of Intent (SoI) on Integrated Full Electric Propulsion (IFEP) technology was signed for India's next-generation Landing Platform Dock (LPD) fleet.²² Under the Electric Propulsion Capability Partnership (EPCP), this initiative uses Rolls-Royce's proven MT-30 marine gas-turbine technology in modular electric-drive systems.²³ Such a process simplifies integration, testing, maintenance and crew manning. Expected operational advantages include greater fuel efficiency, reduced acoustic signature for stealth, and abundant onboard electrical power to support high-energy sensors and future directed-energy weapons.²⁴

The EPCP aims to accelerate India's naval modernisation and build domestic capacity beyond LPDs, covering future destroyers, frigates, and a second indigenous aircraft carrier, while boosting interoperability with UK systems and maritime power projection.²⁵ Furthermore, establishing a Regional Maritime Security Centre of Excellence has been proposed within the Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI) framework, whose maritime security pillar is co-led by India and the UK. Designed as a hub for regional capacity-building, the centre aims to enhance collective responses to non-traditional maritime challenges, including piracy, cybercrime, and illicit trafficking, thereby reinforcing cooperative security mechanisms in the Indian Ocean Region.²⁶

²⁰ [**“Thales and Bharat Dynamics Ltd Agree on Initial Supply of Man Portable Air Defence systems to India”**](#), Thales, 11 February 2025.

²¹ [**“BDL & MBDA Sign Agreement to Establish Advanced Short Range Air-to-Air Missile facility in India”**](#), Bharat Dynamics Limited, Media Release, 17 August 2021.

²² Dinakar Peri, [**“India, U.K. Announce Several Defence Agreements, U.K. Sets Up Dedicated Cell in its MoD Focussed on India”**](#), *The Hindu*, 10 February 2025.

²³ [**“UK India Electric Propulsion Capability Partnership to Power Indian Navy's Next-Gen Warships with Rolls Royce Mt30 Technology”**](#), *Indian Defence Research Wing*, 1 August 2025.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ [**“Statement of Intent on Cooperation on Design & Development of Electric Propulsion Systems for Indian Navy signed with UK”**](#), Press Information Bureau, 29 November 2024.

²⁶ [**“India-UK Defence Ties: Pact Inked to Develop Complex Defence Ties, Jet Warship Engines; Vision 2035 roadmap”**](#), *The Times of India*, 30 July 2025.

The Royal Navy conducted multiple ship visits to India in 2023, while 2024 saw joint drills with the Indian Navy’s Littoral Response Group (South) and participation in Exercise Tarang Shakti.²⁷ An Indian naval officer was appointed Divisional Training Officer at Britannia Royal Naval College.²⁸ The 2035 vision document flags expanded joint military exercises across all domains, with instructor exchanges and India serving as a logistics hub for UK forces in the region.²⁹ While these measures will deepen operational familiarity and build trust, both nations are deepening joint research and development (R&D) in underwater systems, energy weapons, and defence innovation.

Challenges

In recent times, the UK accounted for just over 3 per cent of India’s defence acquisitions, which reflects the limited interaction in bilateral defence cooperation with India, compared to major defence partners such as Russia, the US, France, and Israel.³⁰ India’s indigenisation drive has reshaped its defence procurement landscape by mandating local manufacturing, imposing indigenous content thresholds of at least 50 per cent, and progressively restricting imports of platforms and components through the “positive lists” issued by the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) and Department of Defence Production (DDP).

While these measures are intended to strengthen self-reliance, they also create the perception that India is challenging for foreign firms. With 75 per cent of the 2025–26 defence procurement budget reserved for domestic industry, external vendors face pressure to localise production. Although Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rules have been liberalised, permitting up to 74 per cent through the automatic route and up to 100 per cent with government approval for advanced technologies, actual inflows remain limited due to concerns over intellectual property, limited technology transfers and India’s preference for government-to-government deals. Exceptions exist, such as Sweden’s Saab receiving approval for 100 per cent FDI to manufacture the Carl-Gustaf M4 system.³¹

Concurrently, the UK under the Starmer government has reoriented its industrial approach toward innovation-led growth, identifying defence as one of eight priority

²⁷ [“Royal Air Force Takes to Indian skies to Participate in Exercise Tarang Shakti”](#), British High Commission New Delhi, Government of the United Kingdom, 14 August 2024.

²⁸ PTI, [“Indian Navy Officer Becomes First To Conduct Training In UK's Royal Naval College”](#), 21 May 2024.

²⁹ [“India-UK Vision 2035”](#), Press Information Bureau, 24 July 2025.

³⁰ [“India’s Defence-Industrial Partnership with the UK,”](#) IISS, November 2023.

³¹ Rahul Roy-Chaudhury & Rajiv Roy-Chaudhury, [“Missiles, Manufacturing, and Mutual Trust: What Britain Must Do to Strengthen its Defence Ties with India”](#), *The Economic Times*, 22 July 2025.

sectors, apart from Advanced Manufacturing, Creative Industries, Digital and Technology, Life Sciences, Financial Services, Clean Energy Industries, and Professional and Business Services, which are categorised as IS-8.³² In this case, strengthening the defence industrial base is seen as essential for safeguarding national security, while also serving as a driver of innovation, exports, and industrial scale-ups.³³

For India, this reorientation creates new opportunities for collaboration, particularly as Britain retains comparative advantages in higher education, scientific research, and advanced technology.³⁴ The UK’s evolving role in European security, which is anchored in a ‘NATO-first but not NATO-only’ posture and shaped by the possibility of American retrenchment, further enhances the rationale for deepening India–UK engagement across economic and security domains. At the same time, differences over the Russia–Ukraine conflict and India’s continued ties with Moscow remain persistent sources of friction, complicating an otherwise convergent Indo-Pacific outlook.³⁵

Way Forward

The India-UK bilateral defence industrial roadmap aims to align R&D priorities, secure intellectual property arrangements, and promote joint innovation hubs. The India–UK Vision 2035 includes provisions for annual reviews by the External Affairs Minister of India and the UK Foreign Secretary, aimed at evaluating outcomes to ensure accountability and continuity across governments.³⁶ Vision 2035 can be expected to evolve from a roadmap into a durable pillar of the India–UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The growing India-UK partnership enhances global security and national defence, with both sides leveraging their complementary industrial strengths to expand military engagements and deepen collaboration on strategic capabilities.

³² The UK Government, “[The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy](#)”, June 2025.

³³ “[National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British People in a Dangerous World](#)”, No. 2.

³⁴ C Raja Mohan, “[PM Modi in the UK: Let Go of the Bilateral Baggage](#)”, *The Indian Express*, 23 July 2025.

³⁵ “[National Security Strategy 2025: Security for the British people in a dangerous world](#)”, No. 2.

³⁶ “[Prime Minister meets Prime Minister of the United Kingdom \(July 24, 2025\)](#)”, No. 4.

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