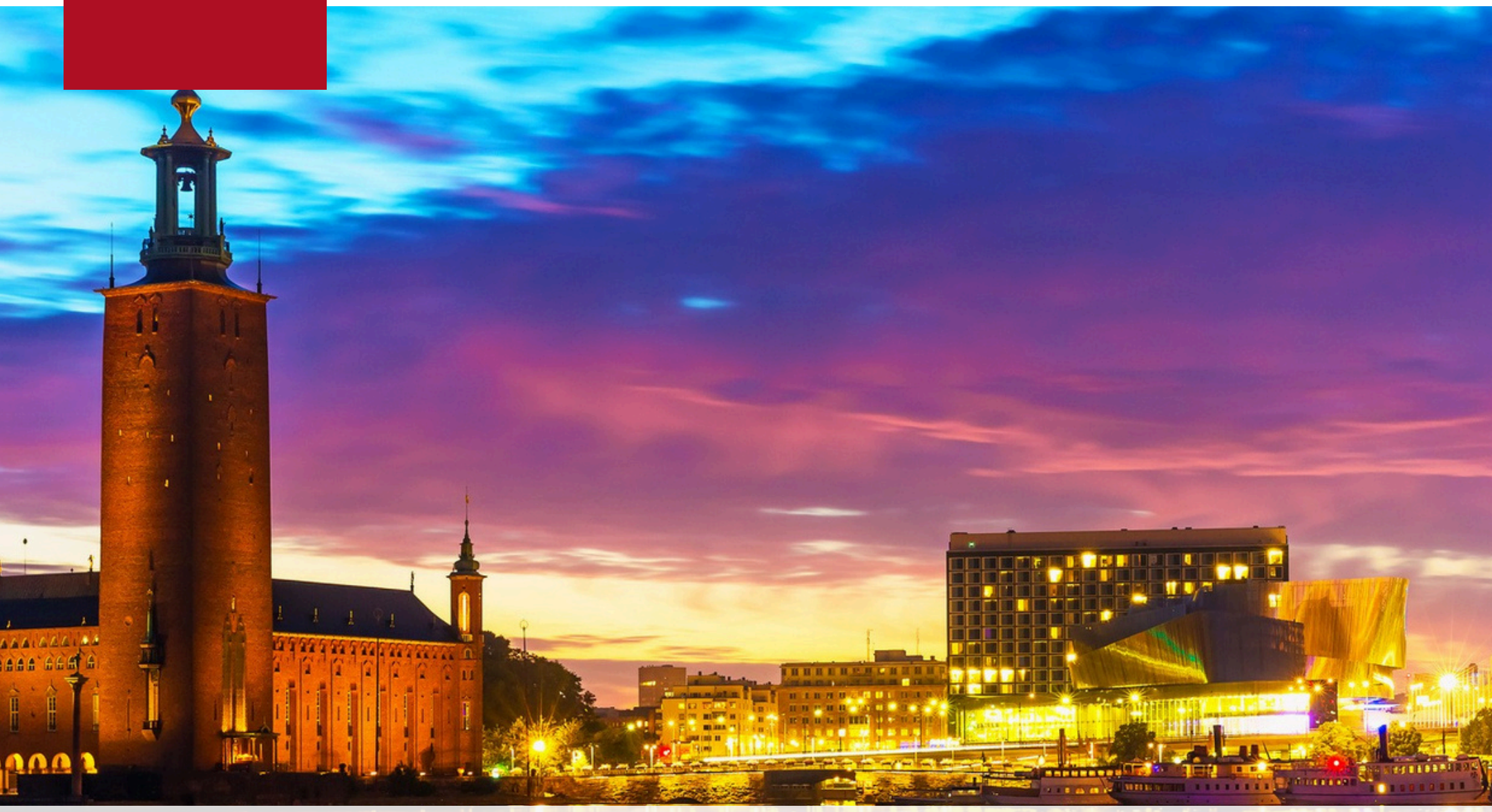
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BILATERAL RELATIONS

INDIA - SWEDEN

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INTRODUCTION

India–Sweden relations are based on longstanding political, economic, technological and people-to-people ties. Diplomatic relations between India and Sweden were established in 1948, and the relationship has since expanded into cooperation across trade and investment, innovation, science and technology, defence and security, sustainability, healthcare, education and culture. India maintains an Embassy in Stockholm, while Sweden is represented in India through its Embassy in New Delhi, Consulate General in Mumbai and honorary consulates in Chennai and Kolkata.

A significant milestone was reached on 17 May 2026, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson agreed to elevate bilateral relations to a Strategic Partnership during their summit in Gothenburg. The partnership is supported by a Joint Action Plan for 2026–2030 and focuses on strategic dialogue and security, next-generation economic cooperation, emerging technologies and trusted connectivity, and cooperation on people, the planet and resilience. The two countries also set a shared objective of doubling bilateral economic exchange, including trade and investment, within five years.

Economic relations remain a central pillar of the partnership. In 2024, Swedish exports of goods to India were approximately SEK 22 billion, while Swedish imports from India were approximately SEK 13 billion. Trade in services was also substantial, with Swedish exports of services to India at about SEK 12.3 billion and imports of services from India at approximately SEK 25.7 billion. Around 300 Swedish companies operate in India, employing an estimated 220,000 people, while more than 70 Indian companies have invested in Sweden.

The partnership is increasingly driven by innovation and future-oriented sectors, including artificial intelligence, digitalisation, green technologies, advanced manufacturing, space, critical minerals and sustainable industrial transition. India and Sweden are also working to strengthen cooperation through initiatives such as the Sweden–India Technology and Artificial Intelligence Corridor, the Joint Innovation Partnership 2.0 and a proposed India–Sweden Joint Science and Technology Centre.



HISTORY

Early Contacts

Historical links between Sweden and the Indian subcontinent predate modern diplomatic relations. One notable connection is the Helgö Buddha, a bronze figurine discovered at the Viking-era settlement of Helgö in Sweden in 1956. The statuette was made in the late fifth or early sixth century, probably in the Swat Valley of present-day Pakistan, and reached Scandinavia sometime during the Vendel or Viking Age. Its exact route to Sweden remains uncertain, although long-distance trade routes such as the Silk Road may have played a role. Today, the Buddha is displayed at the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm.

Commercial links developed much more substantially in the early twentieth century. Swedish companies including Ericsson, SKF, Swedish Match and ASEA established an early business presence in India. SKF, for example, established a branch in Kolkata in 1923, and Swedish companies subsequently became part of India's industrial development following independence.

Cultural connections also form part of the historical relationship. Rabindranath Tagore visited Sweden in 1921 and 1926, providing an early cultural link between the two countries. These historical contacts laid foundations for the deeper diplomatic, commercial and cultural relationship that emerged after India's independence.

Modern Relations

India and Sweden established diplomatic relations in 1948. India established its diplomatic mission in Stockholm in 1949, initially at the level of a legation, which was upgraded to an embassy in 1962. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Sweden in 1957, while Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander visited India in 1960. High-level political exchanges subsequently continued, including Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's visit to Sweden in 1972 and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visits in 1986 and 1988.

The relationship experienced a difficult period following the Bofors controversy of the late 1980s, which centred on allegations of corruption connected with India's procurement of Swedish-made FH-77B howitzers. Despite this episode, bilateral relations gradually broadened in subsequent decades, with cooperation expanding into trade, investment, science and technology, innovation, sustainability and multilateral affairs.

A significant renewal of high-level engagement took place from the mid-2010s. President Pranab Mukherjee made the first visit by an Indian President to Sweden in 2015, followed by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven's engagement with India's Make in India initiative in 2016. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Sweden in 2018, when the two countries adopted a Joint Action Plan and signed a Strategic Innovation Partnership. Sweden also hosted the first India–Nordic Summit in Stockholm that year.

The relationship continued to deepen through the State Visit of King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia to India in 2019, the India–Sweden Virtual Summit in March 2021, and sustained ministerial and institutional cooperation in areas including defence, climate action, green transition, transport, healthcare, science, innovation and digital technologies. Sweden and India also strengthened cooperation through the Leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT), innovation programmes and bilateral mechanisms covering science and technology, sustainable urban development, renewable energy and space.

In 2025, high-level engagement continued through visits and the India–Sweden Joint Commission for Economic, Industrial and Scientific Cooperation, while cooperation expanded in areas including technology, investment, sustainable development and innovation. In April 2026, the two countries held their eighth Foreign Office Consultations, reviewing cooperation in trade, defence and green energy.

A new chapter began on 17 May 2026, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Gothenburg and met Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson. The two countries formally elevated their bilateral relationship to a Strategic Partnership and adopted the Joint Action Plan 2026–2030. The partnership is built around four pillars: strategic dialogue for stability and security; next-generation economic partnership; emerging technologies and trusted connectivity; and cooperation for people, planet and resilience. The leaders also set a shared objective of doubling bilateral economic exchange, including trade and investment, within five years.

BILATERAL VISITS

High-level political engagement has been a defining feature of India–Sweden relations, with regular exchanges between Heads of State, Heads of Government and senior ministers. Since 2014, India and Sweden have significantly intensified their political engagement, complemented by frequent ministerial, official and business-level exchanges.

From India, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited Sweden in 1957, followed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1972 and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986 and 1988. President Pranab Mukherjee visited Sweden in 2015, marking the first visit to Sweden by an Indian President. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Sweden in April 2018 and again in May 2026. His 2018 visit strengthened cooperation in trade, innovation and technology, while Sweden hosted the first India–Nordic Summit in Stockholm.

From the Swedish side, Prime Minister Tage Erlander visited India in 1960, followed by Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1985, King Carl XVI Gustaf in 1993 and 2004, Prime Minister Göran Persson in 2003, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt in 2009 and Prime Minister Stefan Löfven in 2016. King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia undertook a State Visit to India in December 2019.

Bilateral interactions have become increasingly frequent and substantive. Prime Minister Modi and Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven met during the 2018 visit, while subsequent interactions took place through the 2021 India–Sweden Virtual Summit, the India–EU Summit, COP26 in Glasgow, the India–Nordic Summit in Copenhagen in 2022 and COP28 in Dubai in 2023. This ongoing momentum has expanded institutional policy dialogues across foreign affairs, trade, infrastructure, climate, finance, defence, energy and emerging technology sectors.

On 17 May 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid an official visit to Gothenburg at the invitation of Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson. The two leaders elevated India–Sweden relations to a Strategic Partnership and adopted the Joint Action Plan 2026–2030. The visit placed particular emphasis on emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, innovation, space, trade, investment and sustainable development.

The 2026 engagement was further reinforced by Swedish Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Energy, Business and Industry Ebba Busch's participation in the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi in February 2026, and by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal's visit to Stockholm in June 2025. The two countries also held their eighth Foreign Office Consultations in New Delhi on 9 April 2026.

Beyond Head-of-Government engagements, bilateral visits by senior ministers, parliamentarians, business leaders and institutional representatives have played an important role in broadening cooperation. These exchanges have strengthened collaboration in areas such as defence and security, trade and investment, innovation, artificial intelligence, science and technology, green transition, energy, infrastructure and sustainable development, while also supporting stronger links between businesses, research institutions and innovation ecosystems in both countries.

These senior-official tracks have institutionalised rapid partnership delivery. Between 2023 and 2026, the two nations recorded around 30 ministerial-level interactions. In 2025, India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal visited Stockholm for the India–Sweden Joint Commission, while Swedish Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard subsequently travelled to India to participate in the Raisina Dialogue.



ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Economic cooperation is a central pillar of India–Sweden relations, encompassing trade, investment, manufacturing, technology, innovation and services. India is one of Sweden's most important markets in Asia, while Swedish companies have developed a significant presence across India's automotive, engineering, telecommunications, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, energy, information technology and manufacturing sectors.

Bilateral merchandise trade has expanded considerably in recent years. According to India's Department of Commerce, India's exports to Sweden reached approximately US$1.26 billion in FY 2024–25, while imports from Sweden stood at approximately US$2.12 billion, taking total merchandise trade to about US$3.38 billion. India's exports increased by nearly 24% during the year, while imports grew by approximately 22%.

Services are an increasingly important component of the relationship. Swedish official statistics record approximately SEK 12.3 billion in Swedish services exports to India and SEK 25.7 billion in services imports from India in 2024. Swedish goods exports to India were approximately SEK 22 billion, while Swedish goods imports from India were approximately SEK 13 billion during the same year. This reflects a diversified economic relationship extending well beyond merchandise trade.

Investment ties are equally significant. Around 280–300 Swedish companies operate in India, with Swedish business presence spanning manufacturing, automotive, telecommunications, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, retail, IT, energy and engineering. These companies employ approximately 220,000 people in India. More than 70 Indian companies have invested in Sweden, generating around 7,000 direct jobs. Business Sweden also expanded its presence in India by opening its third office in Mumbai in March 2025, strengthening support for Swedish businesses entering and expanding in the Indian market.

The economic relationship is increasingly focused on future-oriented sectors. India and Sweden are expanding cooperation in artificial intelligence, digitalisation, advanced manufacturing, green technologies, clean energy, sustainable transport, life sciences, space and critical technologies. The 2026 India Business Climate Survey found continued strong confidence among Swedish companies operating in India, with most reporting profitability and a majority planning to increase investments, reinforcing India's position as a long-term strategic market for Swedish businesses.

A major new phase began on 17 May 2026, when India and Sweden elevated their bilateral relationship to a Strategic Partnership in Gothenburg. Under the Joint Action Plan 2026–2030, the countries identified a Next-Generation Economic Partnership as one of four core pillars and established a shared objective of doubling bilateral economic exchange including trade and investment within five years. The partnership will also promote “Make in India” and “Made with Sweden” initiatives and deepen cooperation in innovation, emerging technologies, space and green transition.



TRADE, INVESTMENT & BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

India and Sweden are developing an increasingly diversified commercial relationship supported by strong business networks, investment linkages and cooperation in advanced industries. Swedish companies have established a significant presence in India across automotive, engineering, energy, environment, smart cities, information and communications technology, digitalisation, healthcare and life sciences, defence, aerospace and retail. The number of Swedish companies with a business presence in India has grown to more than 280, while around 75 Indian companies have a presence in Sweden.

The commercial relationship received a major boost in 2026 when India and Sweden elevated their bilateral relationship to a Strategic Partnership. Under the Joint Action Plan 2026–2030, the two countries established a shared objective of doubling bilateral economic exchange, comprising trade and investment, within five years. The framework specifically promotes “Make in India” and “Made with Sweden” initiatives, stronger trade facilitation, sustainable infrastructure and deeper business-to-government engagement.

Investment opportunities are expanding beyond traditional manufacturing into emerging and high-growth sectors. Priority areas include advanced manufacturing, automotive and mobility, renewable energy, green shipping, digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence, life sciences, defence and aerospace, space technology, sustainable mining, critical minerals and smart infrastructure. The 2026 Joint Action Plan also calls for stronger cooperation on green ports, airports and digital infrastructure, including data centres, creating opportunities for cross-border investment and technology partnerships.

Technology-driven businesses represent a particularly important area of opportunity. In February 2026, IndiaAI Mission and Business Sweden signed a Statement of Intent to establish the Sweden–India Technology and AI Corridor (SITAC), designed to connect startups, academia and government institutions and leverage Sweden’s research strengths with India's AI talent and digital infrastructure. The upgraded Joint Innovation Partnership 2.0 is also intended to support collaboration in artificial intelligence, 6G, quantum computing, sustainable mining, sustainable transport, critical minerals, space, geospatial research and life sciences.

The conclusion of negotiations for the EU–India Free Trade Agreement on 27 January 2026 creates an additional commercial dimension for Swedish businesses because Sweden is an EU Member State. The agreement is expected to improve market access and reduce tariff barriers, although the published agreement texts remain subject to legal revision, signature and completion of the respective internal procedures before the agreement becomes legally binding. The European Commission estimates that the agreement will cut 96.6% of tariffs and identifies Sweden–India trade and investment as an important beneficiary of the new framework.

The new economic framework is also designed to support smaller businesses and entrepreneurs. India and Sweden have agreed to develop a bilateral SME and start-up platform, strengthen the Trade Facilitation/Fast Track Mechanism, promote intellectual-property cooperation and facilitate business mobility. The countries have further agreed to hold an India–Sweden Bilateral Trade and Investment Summit in India in 2027 under the theme “India–Sweden: Stronger Together – towards 2047”, providing an additional platform for companies to identify partnerships and investment opportunities.

For businesses considering expansion between the two markets, the India–Sweden relationship presents opportunities not only for conventional trade but also for joint ventures, technology transfer, co-production, research partnerships, strategic investment and market entry. The combination of India's large and rapidly expanding market with Sweden's strengths in innovation, engineering, sustainability and advanced technology creates a strong foundation for long-term commercial cooperation. The Strategic Partnership established in 2026 is expected to further strengthen this environment and provide a structured pathway for deeper India–Sweden business engagement.

STRATEGIC & DEFENCE COOPERATION

Strategic and defence cooperation has emerged as an increasingly important dimension of India–Sweden relations, supported by shared interests in international security, technological resilience, counter-terrorism, cybersecurity and a rules-based international order. The two countries maintain institutional mechanisms for defence cooperation, including a Joint Working Group on Defence Cooperation, alongside regular political and security consultations. The 10th meeting of the Joint Working Group was held in Stockholm in June 2025, reflecting the continued expansion of bilateral defence engagement.

The relationship entered a new phase on 17 May 2026, when India and Sweden elevated their bilateral relations to a Strategic Partnership during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Gothenburg. The first pillar of the partnership—"Strategic Dialogue for Stability and Security"—places defence and security cooperation at the centre of the bilateral framework. The two countries agreed to strengthen political, diplomatic and defence-level dialogue, including exchanges between India's National Security Council Secretariat and the Office of the National Security Advisor of Sweden.

Defence industrial cooperation is an important component of this partnership. India and Sweden have agreed to explore greater cooperation in defence innovation and encourage Swedish investment in India's defence production corridors. Existing Swedish investments in India's defence sector provide a foundation for deeper industrial collaboration, technology partnerships, advanced manufacturing and greater integration between the two countries' defence industries.

Sweden's advanced defence and aerospace capabilities complement India's growing defence-manufacturing ecosystem. Cooperation has potential across aerospace, surveillance and sensor technologies, command and control systems, electronic systems, advanced manufacturing, maintenance and life-cycle support. Swedish defence company Saab's wider portfolio includes aeronautics, weapons, command-and-control, sensors and underwater systems, illustrating the breadth of technology areas relevant to potential India–Sweden industrial cooperation.

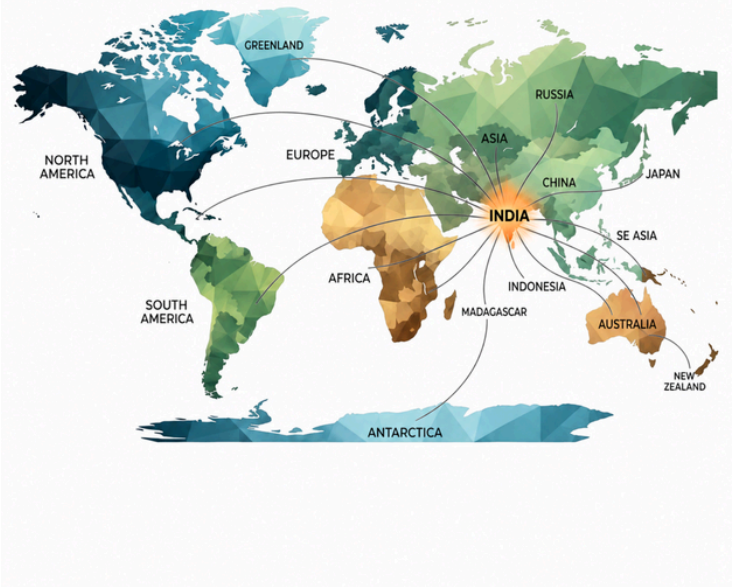
Cybersecurity and emerging security challenges are also becoming increasingly important. Under the 2026–2030 Joint Action Plan, India and Sweden agreed to conduct regular cyber-policy dialogues and cooperate against the misuse of emerging technologies for terrorist purposes. The two countries also committed to stronger cooperation against violent radicalisation and extremism, terrorist recruitment and terrorist financing, including through relevant India–EU mechanisms and internationally agreed standards on anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing.

Maritime and broader strategic security cooperation provides another avenue for engagement. India and Sweden's wider institutional cooperation includes defence, space and polar science, while the new Strategic Partnership provides scope for greater coordination on resilience, secure supply chains, critical technologies and emerging security challenges. The two sides have also agreed to facilitate engagement between national defence colleges and other relevant strategic institutions, supporting professional exchanges, training and strategic dialogue.

The evolving security relationship also reflects Sweden's changing position in the European security architecture following its accession to NATO. For India, Sweden's advanced defence-industrial capabilities, technological expertise and growing role in European security provide opportunities for cooperation that extend beyond traditional defence procurement towards innovation, co-development, industrial partnerships and technology-enabled security solutions.

Looking ahead, the 2026–2030 Strategic Partnership provides a structured framework for expanding India–Sweden cooperation in defence, security, cyber policy and defence innovation. The emphasis on co-development, industrial participation, technology and institutional dialogue creates opportunities for a more resilient and technologically advanced bilateral security relationship, while strengthening cooperation on regional and global security challenges.

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