

**Good afternoon, good evening to those joining from Australia, and a very warm welcome to everyone tuning in from across the Indo-Pacific and beyond.**

**It's a real pleasure to open today's webinar on *Advancing Australia–India Defence Industrial Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific*. This conversation feels both timely and necessary. We're not starting from scratch here, we're building on genuine momentum, particularly from the India–Australia Defence Industry Business Roundtable held in Sydney on 10 October 2025 organised by CUTS International, in partnership with the Australia-India Business Council (AIBC), and Newland Global Group (NGG) as the industry execution partner. That gathering marked a significant milestone: the first time such a roundtable was co-chaired at the ministerial level by both countries.**

**The presence and leadership of Rajnath Singh and Peter Khalil sent a very clear signal - this partnership is no longer just aspirational, it is operational, and increasingly, industrial.**

**If you look at the trajectory of Australia–India defence ties over the past few years, the shift is quite striking. What was once framed largely in terms of strategic alignment shared values, converging interests, and a mutual commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific—has now moved firmly into the realm of practical cooperation. We're seeing more structured dialogues, more joint exercises, and importantly, a growing recognition that defence industrial collaboration is the backbone of any sustained strategic partnership.**

**And that's really the crux of today's discussion.**

**The Indo-Pacific is undergoing a period of rapid change. Supply chains are being rethought, technological competition is intensifying, and traditional procurement models are proving insufficient. In this environment, countries like India and Australia are not just partners of convenience they are partners of necessity.**

**There is, increasingly, a shared understanding that moving beyond a simple buyer–seller dynamic is critical. Instead, the focus is shifting towards co-development, co-production, and joint innovation. Whether it's in undersea capabilities, cyber defence, aerospace manufacturing, or emerging and critical technologies, the opportunities for collaboration are substantial.**

At the same time, let's be candid there are challenges. Regulatory frameworks, differing procurement systems, industrial scale, and even business cultures can create friction. But these are not insurmountable barriers. In fact, forums like the Sydney Roundtable and today's webinar exist precisely to surface these issues and work through them constructively.

One of the most promising ideas to emerge from recent discussions is the concept of a "defence innovation bridge" between India and Australia. It's a simple but powerful idea: connect ecosystems—start-ups, research institutions, industry players and allow innovation to flow more freely between the two countries. If implemented well, this could significantly accelerate capability development while also strengthening supply chain resilience.

There's also a broader strategic logic at play. Both countries are seeking to diversify their defence partnerships and reduce over-dependence on any single source. By working together, India and Australia can enhance not only their own capabilities but also contribute to a more balanced and stable regional security architecture.

Today's webinar brings together an excellent panel of practitioners and experts who have been closely involved in shaping this evolving partnership. From policy and military leadership to industry and research, their perspectives will help us unpack both the opportunities and the practical pathways forward.

As we begin, I'd encourage everyone to think of this not just as a discussion, but as part of a longer journey. The foundations have been laid through high-level political commitment, structured dialogues, and growing industry interest. The task now is to translate that intent into tangible outcomes: joint projects, deeper industrial linkages, and sustained collaboration.

In many ways, the question is no longer *whether* India and Australia should work together in defence industry but *how fast* and *how effectively* we can make it happen.

On that note, let me thank you all for being here today, and I look forward to a rich and engaging discussion.

Thank you.