

The European Union-India Strategic Partnership: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe the strategic partnership between the European Union (EU) and India. The article describes the economic partnership between both sides, which are bigger in the geography of Europe and Asia. This article also analyses the future of environmental and climate change policy on both sides. This article scrutinizes the status quo and the forthcoming potential of a revitalized European Union-India relations. This research highlights the main objective and the hypothesis of using the empirical method to discover the main results. Exploring and analyzing conceptual approaches to and key dimensions of the strategic partnership, including trade, climate policy, and development cooperation, evaluates the prospects for future cooperation. In the end, it describes the strategic recommendations for building a strong partnership between India and the European Union. As a result, the EU-India

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strategic partnership is in the initial phase of achieving high expectations, which has been set as the goal at the first strategic summit in 2020. India and the EU have reached the full potential of their strategic bilateral partnership and are working towards achieving their shared goals of trade and cooperation, peace, prosperity, and stability in the region and beyond.

Keywords: The European Union, India, Economic and Trade, Strategic Partnership, Investment.

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I. Introduction

The relationship between India and the EU dates back to the establishment of diplomatic ties with the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1963. While the EU is one of India's largest trade partners, it is only recently that a new, more political dimension was added to the relationship.

The first India-EU Summit took place in Lisbon in June 2000 and marked a watershed in the evolution of the relationship. In 2004, the 5th India-EU Summit meeting at The Hague endorsed the proposal to upgrade the India-EU relationship to the level of a "Strategic Partnership" and a Joint Action Plan (JAP) was adopted at the Sixth India-EU Summit meeting held in New Delhi in 2005. An analysis of the JAP, however, fails to capture the shift of the geopolitical center of gravity to Asia and India's growing significance in world politics. This article analyses EU-India relations in the context of the changing global strategic landscape.¹

The EU leaders agreed to establish a strategic partnership with India on the July 15, 2020, during the EU-India Summit. Both side leaders' warmth supports the "EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025" as the common blueprint for joint action on the further course of strategic cooperation. This

¹Ministry of External Affairs. "India-EU Relations," Government of India, July 2013, https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India-EU_Relations.pdf.

roadmap works strategically together to accelerate multidimensional partnerships in various fields over the next five years. The EU-India strategic partnership has written a lesson for successful bilateral multi-dimensional relations. India seems to cooperate with the EU in several fields to mitigate the Chinese expansion in South Asia and as well in the Indo-Pacific Ocean region. The EU's strategy works for uniting the member countries, national development banks, and European financial institutions to engage with India for mutual understating to expedite the bilateral strategic partnership. The EU-India strategic cooperation is based on the following six approaches: "the level of standard and belief in democratic systems; transparency and better governing process; reciprocal cooperation; clean and green positions; security is a prime concern; improvise the private sector for the investment." This concept is using the test of the EU-India strategic partnership. On 15th July 2020, the virtual format Summit holds between India and the EU. The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi represents the country in this Summit and the EU was represented by the President of the European Commission and European Council. Both sides' leaders agreed to strengthen the strategic partnership which is based on the common understanding of liberal principles and norms of democracy, rule of laws, freedom, and respect the human rights. Thus, this mutual understanding between India and the EU shapes the people's benefits from both sides.

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The EU and India had stopped their strategic cooperation in 2013, at that time both sides were unable to negotiate on some issues. *“The lack of an EU-India summit since 2012, the stalled trade talks that began in 2007 but have been frozen since 2013, and the lingering case of the Italian navy personnel arrested in India over the death of two fishermen illustrate some of the obstacles in the bilateral relationship.”*² There are Major regional crises have been happening in the last decade, for example, Libya, Syria and Ukraine crises have estranged Europe and India’s bilateral cooperation as well. In recent two years, once again India and the European Union accelerating the strategic partnership after the Porto Summit in 2020. The Indian foreign policy shifted the external affairs toward Europe because of China’s rise in this region and circle India in the context of the BRI projects. India needs to reinforce its position with the EU and the European countries for extensive economic engagement. Till now, India has had a fragile strategic partnership with the EU in comparison to other global powers.³ To what extent is the EU-India strategic

² Javier Solana. “The European Union and India.” Brookings. August 27, 2014. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-european-union-and-india/>; Angela Stanzel and Christian Wagner, “Conclusion: A Fresh Start for Europe and India.” European Council on Foreign Relations. October 2020. https://ecfr.eu/special/what_does_india_think/analysis/conclusion_a_fresh_start_for_europe_and_india#.

³ Emilian Kavalski. “The European Union and India: A Reluctant Partnership Between Aspiring Global Powers,” in the European Union’s strategic partnerships: Global Diplomacy in a Contested World, ed. Laura C Ferreira-Pereira and Michael Smith, (Cham: Springer, International Publishing, 2021): 201. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-66061-1_9.

partnership successful? How do the EU and India promote bilateral cooperation after adopting the 2025 roadmap? This study investigates appropriate outcomes in the context of the above research questions. Further, the research hypothesis is “whether the historical link of India-EU trade partners and the Hague bilateral Summit held in November 2004 do not bring comprehensive results.” This research uses the primary data from the various websites of the government’s associated ministry, think tanks, online newspapers and secondary data from published articles, and books.

II. Literature Review and Theoretical Background

After the collapse of the former USSR, the concept of strategic cooperation highly emerged among the regional powers in the world. There are several countries initiated in a flexible manner to build strategic partnerships with a lonely superpower. In this context, the EU also expedite external affairs beyond the European continent. The Lisbon Treaty paved the way for the EU’s extensive foreign policy across third countries worldwide. This treaty holds on December 1, 2009, in Lisbon, Portugal. The Treaty has brought tremendous reform in the context of European external affairs course of action to the establishment of strategic relations. Later, the EU focuses on strengthening bilateral cooperation and pioneer the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy which came into force as a new

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European diplomatic unit. According to the rule of laws of this treaty, the EU appointed the new president of the European Council (EC). Herman Van Rompuy as president of the EC initiated strategic cooperation and review the relationship with key partners from the world. Further, the strategic cooperation started with the United States (US), Canada, Russia, China, India, Japan, and Brazil.⁴

The 15th Summit between India and the European Union opens strategic cooperation. It is a historical fact that the world's two largest democracies agreed to multidimensional agreements for sustainable development, promoting human rights, open trade, and support for the rules-based world order.⁵ EU-India reviewed the strategic cooperation on October 19, 2021, during its 3rd Summit in Brussels. In this review meeting, both sides agreed to work together to tackle the COVID-19 and strengthen the economy and societies. In May 2021, EU-India agreed to the future roadmap of strategic cooperation to 2025.⁶ The EU-India accelerates comprehensive political dialogue to strengthen the

⁴ Thomas Renard. "The Treachery of Strategies: A Call for True EU Strategic Partnerships." Egmont—The Royal Institute for International Relations, September 18, 2022. <https://aei.pitt.edu/32321/1/ep45.pdf>.

⁵ EEAS. "EU-INDIA Strategic Partnership a Roadmap to 2025." The European External Action Service, July 2020. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu-india_factsheet_2020-07.pdf.

⁶ Ministry of External Affairs. "Joint Press Release on India-EU Strategic Partnership Review." Government of India, October 19, 2021. https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/34402/Joint_Press_Release_on_India_EU_Strategic_Partnership_Review#:~:text=The%203rd%20India%2DEU%20Strategic,societies%20as%20well%20as%20individuals.

bilateral cooperation in February 2021. The Brexit impacts are limited to the EU-India bilateral partnership since 2016. The EU-India high level of political dialogue shapes the strong strategic cooperation.⁷ Since the 1970s, EU-India has focused on trade and economy as core areas for cooperation. During 2019-20, India-EU trade reached USD 104.93 billion, the Indian exports comprising USD 53.73 billion worth and imports of USD 1.2 billion. Foreign direct investment (FDI) has increased between India and the EU by around USD 109.55 billion.⁸ As of 2021, the EU stood as India's third-largest trading partner, with substantial trade flows in both directions. Additionally, EU foreign direct investment (FDI) in India reached USD 95.21 billion in 2020, indicating strong economic ties between the two entities. Nearly 15% of Indian exports being directed to the EU in 2021 further underscores the importance of this trade relationship for India's economy. India is a key partner of the EU from the South Asian region in the area of economic, political and strategic reasons. The EU wants extensive ties up in the Indo-Pacific region which is why India is too important for strategic cooperation. India is an emerging world economy, and its geography is surrounded by

⁷ Robert Schuman Foundation. "Europe-India: New Strategic Challenges". The Research and Studies Centre on Europe, December 13, 2021. <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/0616-europe-india-new-strategic-challenges>.

⁸ Ankita Dutta. "Unpacking the India-EU Economic Relationship." Observer Research Foundation, April 16, 2021. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/unpacking-india-eu-economic-relationship/>.

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the sea and oceans which is a better landmark for trade and business. After Brexit, the EU seems to have a strong economic knot in the world and India can accelerate the EU's economic aspects.⁹

Although, while there has been a notable increase in merchandise exports from the European Union (EU) to India over the years, the rate of growth may not be sufficient to significantly diversify the EU's economic relations. Despite the growth in exports from US\$12.6 billion in 2000 to US\$46.3 billion in 2021. The estimated trade volume of \$135 billion in the fiscal year 2022-23 represents an increase from US\$116 billion in the previous fiscal year (FY2022). However, considering the size and economic capabilities of both India and the EU, there is room for further expansion in trade relations.¹⁰

⁹ Sangeeta Khorana. "The European Union-India Strategic Partnership: An Examination of the Economic Aspects." In *EU-India Relations. Contributions to International Relations*, edited by Philipp Gieg, Timo Lowinger, Manuel Pietzko, Anja Zürn, Ummu Salma Bava, and Gisela Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet. Springer, Cham, (2021): 141-151.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65044-5_7.

¹⁰ Sushma Ramachandran. "India-EU FTA is a win-win for both economies." Deccan Herald, December 14, 2023.

<https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/india-eu-fta-is-a-win-win-for-both-economies-2810694>.

Kavalski discusses the EU and India's strategic partnership in the historical connection between South Asia and Europe.¹¹ For instance, India has been acknowledged by the European Commission since the 1960s. The Indian foreign policy also wants to engage with the EU in trade and economic cooperation on a larger scale. India is the first country from the South Asia region, which started diplomatic coordination with the EU. Because the EU was emerging as a stronger regional organization in the European continent. India has focused on four key areas of the strategic partnership with the EU: (1) Both sides are increasing trade and investment, which is the prime goal to achieve. India is reaching out to the European market and the EU seems to contribute to the growth of Indian products in the European market; (2) India-EU enhances strategic support to each other in the age of multi-alignment. The Indian foreign policy works to make economic cooperation simultaneous with the major powers in the world; (3) this economic engagement is based on the respect for sovereign equality of the partner groups. It is supporting the comparative advantage and understanding of the benefits and interests of partner countries in the context of mutuality; (4) it is a kind of strategic partnership that supports

¹¹ Emilian Kavalski, "The EU-India Strategic Partnership: Neither Very Strategic, nor Much of a Partnership." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29, no. 1 (2016): 192-208.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2015.1007031>.

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each other as a form of extensive trade and economic cooperation according to the reciprocal benefits.¹²

During the Cold War, the Indian government changed its foreign policy, strengthened the third-world countries, and united under the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM). The former Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru pioneered the Indian foreign policy according to the norms of soft power politics using the tool of cultural and spiritual links. Indian external affairs widely use Bollywood (Indian film industry), Yoga and Ayurveda, the Indian diasporic communities and its cuisine to shape the bilateral and multilateral collaboration in the world. Prime Minister Narendra Modi accelerated the strategic partnership according to the norms of soft power politics since 2014.¹³ There are several visits of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the European countries, the Indian diasporic communities enthusiastically participate in the program and PM Modi orates the Indian communities. The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made many state visits to European countries since came into power in 2014. Last year's visit to Germany, Denmark and France was historic starting from May 2 to 4, 2022. India and Germany have had deeper diplomatic ties since the eve of May 2000, when both countries started a

¹² Rajendra K. Jain and Gulshan Sachdeva. "India-EU Strategic Partnership: A New Roadmap." *Asia Europe Journal* 17, no. 3 (2019): 309–325.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/S10308-019-00556-0>.

¹³ Joseph Nye. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs, (2004).

strategic partnership. Both countries also launched the “Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC)” in 2011 to provide stability to the bilateral partnership. Prime Minister Modi’s visit to Germany started the 6th IGC which had been postponed during the Coronavirus outbreak. Modi’s Visit to Europe nations is more effective and impacts its bilateral cooperation to strengthen deepening trade and economic cooperation from the bilateral to the multilateral level. The EU Member States and non-EU countries also focus on the Indo-Pacific framework of strategic partnership and support the Indian position in this region. Modi also successfully brought European entrepreneurs to invest in India under the “Make in India” policy of the government.¹⁴ India is now working on these issues with its European partners, i.e., sustainability, climate change, digitization, cyber security, preservation of oceanic biodiversity, innovation, technology, space cooperation, defense, and renewable energy.

III. Data and Methods

This article highlights the Indian perspective on global governance: must have liberal democratic norms, people representatives, and advocacy for a legitimate bilateral

¹⁴ Shubhajit Roy. “Explained: The Significance of PM Narendra Modi’s Europe Tour.” *The Indian Express*. May 2, 2022. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-the-significance-of-pm-modis-europe-tour-7896689/>; Anandita Bhada, “Prime Minister Modi’s Europe Visit: An Analysis.” *MP-IDSA*. May 30, 2022. <https://idsa.in/issuebrief/prime-minister-modi-europe-visit-abhada-300522>.

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partnership. The empirical analysis uses various data to find out the main objectives of bilateral strategic cooperation between the EU and India. In recent times, the global powers are searching the consumer market to sell out the products in foreign markets. India is known for its 1.3 billion inhabitants across the country, which is the 2nd largest population in the world after China. In recent years, the purchasing power of the general people has increased in the country. Thus, India is a big market to sell different kinds of products. After the end of the 2nd World War, many countries are suffering from the fragile economic and political systems in countries. Most of the European countries are widely dominated by third world or developing countries. The emergence of the EU as a global regional economic power and decided by the EU's core committee to cooperate with the global economic powers to remove poverty alleviation and welfare the mass people in the world. The EU's prime objective is to establish a strategic partnership to support the up-gradation of people's living standards in the context of improving social, economic, and skill-based education.¹⁵

The primary data was collected from various websites of the think tanks, EU officials' data, newspapers op-ed, online libraries materials and various databases to describe the EU's strategic partnership with India on a larger scale regarding gaining

¹⁵ Thomas Diez. "Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering 'Normative Power Europe.'" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (June 2016): 613–636. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298050330031701>.

partnerships in the maritime domain and economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. In New Delhi during the Raisina Dialogue 2020, Mr. Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Commission, talked about the EU and India's strategic partnership must be shaped in a stronger way for better bilateral cooperation.¹⁶ India is an influential regional partner from the South Asia region to support the EU's willingness in the Indo-Pacific region. The emergence of China across the globe in the context of the flagship economic project the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and India is wary of China's rising in maritime business routes. To counter the circling of India by the Chinese economic policy to pave the India-EU strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific region. The EU decides to invest in India to boost bilateral cooperation. The EU's Euro 300 billion investment projects as an international fund to the cementing the ground together.¹⁷

India is the bigger emerging consumer market in the world with 580 million middle-class inhabitants who can strengthen the foreign market across the country. The EU countries bind by double tax treaties with India, this treaty is reducing profits tariffs.

¹⁶ Josep Borrell Fontelles. "EU High Representative-Vice President, Speech at Raisina Dialogue 2020." Observer Research Foundation, January 21, 2020. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/after-the-5th-raisina-dialogue/>.

¹⁷ Jagannath Panda. "India Could Make or Break the EU's Global Gateway." The National Interest, January 16, 2022. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/india-could-make-or-break-eu%E2%80%99s-global-gateway-199454>.

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It is the best opportunity for the EU countries to invest world's fastest emerging markets. The EU and India have agreed to implement a future course of action with strengthened the roadmap of 2025 in the context of strategic partnership.

IV. EU's Penetration into the Indian Market

The EU-India trade in goods reaches the worth of Euro 62.8 billion, and the EU becomes the third-largest business partner of India in 2020. India has 11.1 percent of total trade and commerce in comparison to China reaches 12 percent and the US shares an 11.7 percent of trade partnership with the EU. The EU receives 14 percent of the total Indian export as the second largest in the world. India becomes the 10th largest trading partner of the EU in 2020 accounts 1.8 percent of total trade between both sides. India is still behind the Chinese shares with 16.1 percent, the UK shares 12.2 percent and the US shares 15.2 percent of total trade in 2020. Trade has increased between the EU and India by 72 percent since 2010. In 2020 the trade in services between both sides increased tremendously and reached Euro 32.7 billion. During the last decade, the EU's investment inflows increased from eight percent to 18 percent. In 2019, the EU's FDI stocks amounted in India to Euro 75.8 billion. Moreover, the EU's foreign direct investment stocks in China is reached Euro 198.7 and Brazil has FDI from the EU of around the Euro 318.9 billion. There are six thousand EU companies are investing across the country and have shared

with the Indian companies. It creates 1.75 million direct jobs and indirectly provides employment to around six million people. The jobs are created in various manufacturing and construction companies in various Indian states.¹⁸

There are tremendous opportunities for EU entrepreneurs to access the Indian market to take the upper hand through the comprehensive interconnection between both sides. The Indian middle-class population is significant in comparison to the US because they are younger and become the largest middle-class consumer inhabitant by 2025. India is a significant country in the South Asia region because of its fastest-growing economy and holds 6th position in the world. India has a large population of around 1.3 billion and ranks second after China in the world. There is a cheap labor market across the country and people need employment on a larger scale in the country. The FDI will create thousands of jobs for unemployed people and the EU seems to invest in India. EU investment in India would create job opportunities for the Indian people. India is a much more suitable for EU Member States for investment because of growing consumerism in the country is worth importance to accelerate market economy. The World Bank's survey and its assessment

¹⁸ Chris Devonshire-Ellis. "EU, India Announce 'Comprehensive Connectivity Partnership.'" India Briefing, May 10, 2021.

<https://www.india-briefing.com/news/eu-india-announce-comprehensive-connectivity-partnership-how-eu-businesses-can-benefit-22257.html/>.

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show that the increasing market value of South Asia is the prime location for the EU's investments.¹⁹

V. The Key Priorities Areas for Strategic Partnership and Challenges

The environmental issue is key agenda to strengthen the norms of climate change. The EU is keen to support the Indian authority in the implementation of the Paris agreement. To adopt the policy to transform a resource-efficient economy process. Both sides agreed to accelerate the complete transformation of clean energy and make attention to renewable energy. There is a need to work for action on climate and energy at the municipal level and other platforms as well. India is applying the provision of the Paris Agreement on different projects in the country. There is huge cooperation between India and the EU to establish clean energy and climate projects in the country. There are several solar and disaster-resilient infrastructures nurtured by the different agencies and shaping the way of agreement. The new strategic cooperation is focusing on a circular economy in the context of resource efficiency and adding the air pollution, plastic and litter from the marine. Water is a burning issue for any country that's why the EU wants a strong policy to save drinking water across

¹⁹ Simant Shankar Bharti. "Strengthening the Development Partnership between the EU and South Asia: A Contemporary Analysis." *Slovak Journal of Political Sciences* 20, no.2 (2020): 278–98.
<https://doi.org/10.34135/sjps.200205>.

the world. India is working the increasing urbanization on a larger scale and the smart city planned launch by the PM Modi in India and the EU is boosting the Indian aspirations.²⁰

Open fair trade and economic cooperation is key agenda of the EU and India. The post-pandemic recovery through the joint workforce. The creation of such jobs minimizes the unemployment rate and promotion of sustainable economic growth. There is a force for a regular meeting between the EU delegation and its Indian counterpart at the high level. Strategic cooperation is based on concrete balanced, ambitious and mutually beneficial business and financial agreements for each other. There is a consensus between India and the EU to strengthen and reform financial institutions for enhancing collaboration on global governance for wider economic growth. In G20, the EU focuses that Indian cooperation is necessary to accelerate trade and investment. Security issues and foreign policy is key agenda for the strategic cooperation between the EU and India. Both sides agreed to enhance meetings and dialogue on concurrent issues. To support the peace process and regional development, the fight against terrorism, non-proliferation and the rule of laws make a reality for the state. The EU and India seem to bind with enhanced cooperation in various key organizations to set up a conversation and talk on maritime security. The

²⁰ EEAS. "EU-INDIA Strategic Partnership a Roadmap to 2025." The European External Action Service, July 2020.
https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu-india_factsheet_2020-07.pdf.

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dangerousness of cybercrime is emerging at a huge level in the world, India and the EU seriously want to work together to strengthen cyber security. The digitalization process and human rights are also prime concerns of the strategic partnership. The Indian government promoted a digital India campaign across the country, when PM Modi came in power in May 2014 enhanced the digital promotion in the offices and his government continued work on it. And how to restrict cybercrime is a big issue and challenge to the world's security. The EU and India support each other and cooperate on the establishment of digital infrastructure, a free, secure and stable cyberworld. There is the main focus on regulating the service norms and the framework for regulations and both sides' diplomacy is working for mutually benefitted. The trustworthy intelligence is a challenge to the establishment of the EU and India for accelerating the strategic partnership. And the issue of human rights is also a significant part of the strategic partnership between the India and EU. The saving of children's rights and women's empowerment is a big concern for global governance. Proportional representation in constitutional bodies, gender equality and their fundamental rights are needed to be fulfilled by the international organization and agencies.²¹

Furthermore, the EU and India have collaborated to expedite the smart city projects in India. The EU companies support

²¹ European Council. "EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025." Council of the European Union, January 20, 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/45026/eu-india-roadmap-2025.pdf>.

urbanization, sustainable water, pureness of air quality, and waste management. Health and family welfare are the strong areas where the EU and India cooperate to promote health security and COVID-19 preparedness. The EU is providing a huge number of scholarships to Indian students, researchers and professors in the context of interchanging the ideas, exchanging norms, and promoting research and training. The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action, Erasmus Plus, Erasmus Mundus, and Horizon Europe scholarship programs provide a large number of scholarships and grants to study in the EU countries. The comprehensive space research collaboration, civil aviation and modernization of the Indian railways are key agendas of strategic partnership as well.

VI. The EU's Asia Strategy: Challenges to a Strategic Partnership

*“At global level, the EU is the most successful example of regional integration and durable peace between countries and yet ‘the idea of Europe’ resonates differently in different regions of the world. The biggest challenge in assessing the EU as a global economic, political and security actor lies in the fact that it is constantly evolving”.*²²

²² Ummu Salma Bava. “The EU and India: Challenges to a Strategic Partnership,” in *Partnerships for effective multilateralism: EU relations with Brazil, China, India and Russia*, edited by Giovanni Grevi and Alvaro de Vasconcelos. Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), (2008): 105-114. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep07023.10.pdf>.

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It is a reality that for long period the EU doesn't show a deep interest to catch out India from the South Asia region which is a huge supporter of democracy, peace and prosperity at the global level, what the EU spreading its basic norms through the Copenhagen criteria for its member countries. Although some of India's strategic interests converge with those of the EU, both have varied global aspirations. While India is the only non-western democracy in South Asia and normatively the closest to western democratic values, its actual democratic practice did not gain the recognition of the West for a long time. In the past, the EU also showed a tendency to lecture India on its human rights record. However, the EU's proactive engagement with China, although the latter is not a democracy, reinforces the sense that, despite the emphasis on normative values, the EU is also driven by realist considerations based on trade.²³ The EU and China Summit was held on April 1, 2022, after a gap of almost two years. Which was failed to bridge the increasing gap between China and the EU raised the questions of Ukraine, Hongkong and sanctions against Members of the European Parliament and talked on human rights violations. There are no such challenges

²³ Mukesh Shankar Bharti. "The Sustainable Development and Economic Impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative in Ethiopia." *East Asia* 40, no 1 (2023): 175–194. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-023-09402-y>.

receiving India from the EU and China partnership.²⁴ While India's perception of the EU is at its highest position for international cooperation and respect for human rights. Due to the French support to India in the EU, now India and EU strategic partnership accelerating.²⁵

India and the EU agreed on cooperation in the area of environment and global warming. These areas of cooperation are cementing the bilateral strategic partnership. As befits the gravity of its potentially existential consequences, Climate Change has become the most concrete pillar in the India-EU cooperative. While the Paris Agreement signified the convergence of historically divergent viewpoints, it is the steps taken since 2015 that have truly cemented the partnership between the two parties. Climate changes are a bigger concern for world communities and create major challenges for the global population. The Paris Agreement shows the way to work together on behalf of the world communities to restrict carbon emissions. India is very keen to work with the EU on emerging issues that are dangerous to human life.²⁶

²⁴ Niranjana Marjani. "The China Factor in India's Engagements with Europe." *The Diplomat*, April 30, 2022.

<https://thediplomat.com/2022/04/the-china-factor-in-indias-engagements-with-europe/>.

²⁵ Bava. "The EU and India."

²⁶ Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. "The India-EU Partnership: A New Era of Multilateral Cooperation." KAS, accessed January 10, 2023.

<https://www.kas.de/documents/264392/264441/India-EU+Partnership.pdf/77f956c7-c3b8-5cd3-7423-3baff401b6c6?version=1.0&t=1584011443441>

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In the maritime domain, both sides enthusiastically adopted the policy in cooperation towards the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions. Maritime security has emerged as a critical area of cooperation between India and the European Union. Security is one of the key sectors where India and the EU want a mutual partnership. Both sides agreed to work on the restriction of cross-border terrorism and cyber security. It has been set up to facilitate exchange of best practice on addressing cybercrime and strengthening cyber security and resilience. The EU and India seem to work on the development of drone technology to the boosting of new warfare and strengthen security. The French side is backing the EU to deeper cooperation with India in the Indian Ocean Region. The growing importance of sea routes for business purposes is important for the EU to get support from India in the region. The emergence of non-conventional methods of warfare was deemed a significant area of future cooperation wherein through initiatives such as NATO's Science for Peace and Security, India and the EU can forge global standards around the use of new weapon systems such as drone technology. EU - India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership to promote access to and disseminate clean energy and climate friendly technologies and encourage research and development.

Both sides also working in the space area, India's ISRO and the EU's European space agency have cooperated in various space activities. An ISRO-ESA Arrangement concerning network and

operations cross-support which will enable the use of the ground stations to support each other's spacecraft missions was signed recently. ISRO has contributed towards Galileo- the global navigation satellite system (GNSS). *"The EU will continue to encourage India to open up its economy to strengthen its international competitiveness, benefit from a better integration into global value chains, and increase its share in global trade, to bring it more in line with its growing share of global GDP,"* it asserted. The on-going talks on a long-pending broad-based trade and investment agreement (BTIA) is also mentioned in the strategy paper, with the European Commission asserting that the final text should be *"balanced, ambitious and mutually beneficial"*. In terms of investment in talent and innovation, the strategy calls for increase in outreach activities by the EU and its member states to attract more Indian participation in EU programs through fairs, workshops, and seminars at state and city level. It also calls for more engagement in joint activities for cultural heritage preservation and promotion in both EU and India, to further promote tourism to the EU, and support youth-exchanges.²⁷

²⁷ Ankita Dutta. "EU's Strategy on India: Time to Revitalise the Natural Partnership." Indian Council of World Affairs, February 1, 2019. https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls_id=4814&lid=2837.

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VII. India's role in EU's Indo-Pacific policy

Since the initiatives of the concept of the Indo-Pacific, India become the central agenda of the US and other Pacific countries. Because India has a larger coastal, land and some islands in the region that's why India is an important resident player in the Indo-Pacific region. The Growing China presence in the region is challenging the western allies and the French government to understand all the future scenarios in the region. The French government wants the EU's deeper cooperation with India to counter its rival block in the entire region. As the EU seeks to engage deeper in the Indo-Pacific, strengthening its partnership with India will be crucial. With the rise of China, the EU needs a powerful alliance and a stronghold in the Indo-Pacific security architecture. Also, the speed with which the EU is reshaping its Indo-Pacific agenda speaks of the realization of how China aims to increase its pre-eminence within the established world order, and even fundamentally revise it. Therefore, Europe's new strategic orientation towards India in the Indo-Pacific and India's priority towards maintaining its strategic autonomy with Europe will help build a robust relationship.²⁸ The 16th India–EU summit in 2021, the EU announced its Indo–Pacific Strategy which

²⁸ Sunil Prasad. "EU-India Relations in a Changing Strategic Environment." EURACTIV. August 2, 2022, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/eu-india/opinion/eu-india-relations-in-a-changing-strategic-environment/>.

highlights Europe's interest in the region coupled with its ambitions to counter its systemic rival.

VIII. Major Challenges for the EU - India Strategic Partnership

Since India-EU launched the 'strategic partnership' in 2005, both sides focus to deepen the bilateral partnership through multiple cooperation. The main challenge is to focus on unified cooperation with the EU and not on separate cooperation with the EU Member States. Between 2012-16, India and the EU halted more annual and other summits that have shown the downside of strategic cooperation. India and the EU have challenges to stop the negative sides to operationalize smooth strategic cooperation, it is a challenge for both sides to address and overcome the obstacles. The EU and India bilateral partnership has not yet fulfilled several criteria of potential strategic ties. The growing importance of the Indo-Pacific region is one of the key components as a form of geopolitical connectivity to accelerate political and economic interests with the help of India to start deepening multi-cooperation. India also realized that in the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, there is a great need for European assistance to counter China's aggression in the maritime domain. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is supporting and favoring the EU's position and strategic partnership with India

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and the Indo-Pacific concept of political and economic cooperation.²⁹

The EU's aim is to play a greater role in the arena of geopolitics and geoeconomics through connectivity in the Indo-Pacific. Where India is a key residential player and an emerging economy which is ranked 5th position in the world. The EU and India both sides are agreed to work together to achieve a win-win formation through deeper connectivity. In this regard, the EU institutions started pragmatic cooperation with Indian entrepreneurs in different key strategic sectors. India is also providing leverage to the EU's developing agenda in the country.³⁰ Cabotage restriction is a key challenge affecting the EU's operation in India. This is causing the EU's shipping sector competitiveness towards India. On the connectivity parameter, India lags behind most EU countries with sub-optimal levels of investment and technology transfer. Where EU countries have a capital-rich and technologically advanced Europe in deeper sectors related to connectivity in India. At the multilateral front, The EU and India must work to uphold the legacy of the fundamental principles of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and strengthen the rules-based multilateral trading system. Both

²⁹ Robert Schuman Foundation, "Europe-India."

³⁰ Arun S Nair. "India-EU Connectivity Partnership: Potential & Challenges." July 2020.

https://www.ris.org.in/sites/default/files/Publication/DP%20250%20Arun%20S%20Nair_1.pdf.

sides should also focus on and engage in issues that affect international trade. India and the EU's governance should manage in a suitable manner to address major recurring development challenges.³¹

The major challenge is how India and the EU cement their bilateral re-engagement to enhance bilateral strategic cooperation which is in a fragile position. Since the growing importance of India in the Indo-Pacific framework of global attraction to gain geopolitical mileage in this region, the EU acknowledge India again to restart the bilateral talk after 2016. The EU's diplomacy and thinking process is far ahead of India's aid recipient from the EU and its Member States. The EU sees India as a development partner rather than just a beneficiary. This type of new transition has brought the EU towards India's commitment to economic and trade cooperation.³² India has been facing geopolitical challenges from China's Belt and Road Initiatives in the South Asia region. China's military adventurism in the Indo-Pacific region is threatening India and its alliances in this region, where India wants deeper strategic partnerships with the Europeans to counter futuristic challenges from opponent alliances. India and the EU also committed to working on climate change to save the

³¹ Bharti. "Strengthening the Development Partnership between the EU and South Asia."

³² Pascaline Winand. "The European Union and India: From Donor-Recipient Relations to Partners in Development." *Global Affairs* 7, no. 4 (2021): 579–95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2021.1961597>.

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environment from global warming.³³ The post-COVID era is a challenge for every nation to maintain a supply chain because the Coronavirus outbreak damaged the global supply chain, which is also a major challenge for India and the EU how to drive trade and economic cooperation. The 2025 roadmap would support India and the EU's future cooperation without any kind of obstacles to cement a deeper strategic partnership. Both sides are also aware of maritime security and this roadmap adopted cooperation in security domains to provide safe and secure maritime.³⁴

³³ Amrita Narlikar. "Scripting a Third Way: The Importance of EU-India Partnership." Observer Research Foundation, April 28, 2022.
<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/scripting-a-third-way/>.

³⁴ Saheb Singh Chadha and Nidhi Varma. "India and the European Union: Next Steps in Strategic Partnership." Brookings, July 16, 2020.
<https://www.brookings.edu/events/india-and-the-european-union-next-steps-in-strategic-partnership/>.

IX. Discussion and Results

Table 1: India – EU Bilateral Relations

Year	Cooperation Areas	Talk
1962	Enhancement of diplomatic relations between India and the European Economic Community (EEC)	Successful
2017	European Investment Bank (EIB) opened its first office for the South Asian Region in New Delhi	Successful
2020	India–EU Strategic Partnership: Roadmap to 2025	Successful
2020	Establishment of a High-level Dialogue on Trade and Investment (HLDTI)	Successful
2021	Resumption of Free Trade Negotiations	Successful
2021	Inaugural India–EU Maritime Security Dialogue	Successful

Source: https://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/34894_MEA_Annual_Report_English.pdf

Table 1 shows that the 15th India-EU Summit opens the door for successful strategic partnership and all negotiations and talks are successful. The Indian government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is keen to make strong trade and investment between India and the EU.

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Table 2: The EU Member Countries Imports Goods from India, 2020

Country	Euro in Million	% of India in extra EU imports	Country	Euro in Million	% of India in extra EU imports
Germany	7013	1.9	Romania	314	1.5
Italy	4236	2.7	Slovenia	272	1.8
Netherlands	3923	1.3	Finland	225	1.3
France	3899	2.3	Malta	174	8.9
Belgium	3867	2.9	Slovakia	151	1.1
Spain	3052	2.5	Bulgaria	144	1.2
Poland	1293	1.8	Croatia	113	2.1
Portugal	633	3.7	Cyprus	76	2.4
Sweden	616	1.5	Lithuania	54	0.6
Denmark	601	2.3	Latvia	52	1.4
Austria	5.36	1.5	Estonia	30	0.8
Czechia	462	1.1	Luxembourg	6	0.3
Ireland	440	0.8	Hungary	419	1.4
Greece	415	2			

Source: Eurostat online date code 2020

In recent years, the EU and India's bilateral relations have witnessed the progress of economic and political convergence turn into an extensive strategic partnership. The Chinese economic engagement growth in the context of the Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) and the “17+1” framework is one of the causes of Indian strategic partnership with the EU.³⁵ Because of China’s growing economy and its policy to circle the Indian stances in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific to force the Indian authorities to do something with other regional power like the EU and the

³⁵ Mukesh Shankar Bharti. “The Evolution of China’s Economic Engagement in Central and Eastern Europe.” *Economic and Regional Studies* 15, no. 1 (2022): 90–106. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ERS-2022-0007>.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The geopolitics challenges are a great concern for the EU and India. India and the EU have many similarities in sense of liberal democracy, linguistic diversities, and multipolarity, both sides accelerate strategic partnership. This similarity causes better trade and economic cooperation between the EU and India. This research highlights the future of this strategic partnership is bright and sustainable.³⁶

The EU focuses on the development of economics and has been transforming the various infrastructural settlement in third world countries. Thus, the EU is a key promoter of liberal democracy, and its allied institution vested the development projects in all the South Asian countries. India is bigger in geography in the region and its growing importance in the Indo-Pacific brought India and the EU into a strategic partnership. The EU's development economic discourse brought multi-dimensional development to the developing countries in the South Asia region. There is a need for economic transformation in developing countries and the EU's the trade and investment support the development of public welfare institutions. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the central part of the EU's foreign policy to invest in the reconstruction and establishment of manufacturing units in developing countries.

³⁶ Rahul Kamath. "India and the European Union: A Relationship yet to Achieve Its True Potential." Observer Research Foundation, February 8, 2022. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-and-the-european-union/>.

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India is the recipient of the larger scale of EU funds for the various developing sector in the country.³⁷

The EU is a promoter of peace and regional security across the world. India has been suffering cross-border terrorism in the northern part of India. The country has grave security issues in the South Asia region. The EU supports the Indian stance on the Kashmir issues of counterterrorism. The EU accepts thousands of immigrants from the South Asian region. In the recent circumstances in Afghanistan, the EU supported maintaining the rule of law and security in the South Asian cases. The EU also fund rural economics and agricultural development in India as well in South Asia.³⁸ The main debate is that India wants a wider strategic partnership which is why the EU and India adopted the 118 points agenda for 2025. These 118 points MoUs signed between India and the EU shaped the roadmap to 2025. The EU enunciated the Indo-Pacific policy in April 2021, which is easily reachable to the Indian territory. Thus, the EU is also eager to invest in India and pioneer the Indo-Pacific Maritime business routes. The Indian Prime Minister Modi attended the virtual

³⁷ Simant Shankar Bharti. "Development Economics and Re-Construction of Developing Countries: Reflections and Insights." *Journal of Scientific Papers 'Social Development and Security'* 10, no.4 (2020): 69–77. <https://doi.org/10.33445/sds.2020.10.4.6>.

³⁸ Simant Shankar Bharti. "Confronting Afghanistan's Security and Development Challenges: A Contribution of the European Union." *Geopolitics Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (January 2022): 151–76. <https://doi.org/20.1001.1.17354331.1401.18.68.7.9>.

meeting with all 27 member states' leaders of the EU in May 2021. Apart from this strategic cooperation, India wants the EU's attention toward an aggressive China. The China-Pakistan nexus is created security issues for India since the 1990s. India wants the EU to take steps to restrict the proxy war and terrorism that has been supported by Pakistan against India.³⁹

The European Commission's vision document for Asia (2007-13) for regional development partnership. The South Asia region is an important strategic location for trade and commerce. India is an emerging economic power now it has 5th position in the world. The emergence of two dominant power in Asia is key attention for the global power. India and China both have the largest territory, populations and strong economies. But China doesn't want India should emerge as the regional dominant power. The Indian foreign policy is searching for a global partner from Europe and US. China and Pakistan have an alliance which circles India from land to maritime route. India is a member of the QUAD countries group to dominate the Maritime economic corridor in the Indo-Pacific and the Indian Ocean as well.⁴⁰ Since 2020 India-EU came closer and accelerates bilateral cooperation.

³⁹ Gurjit Singh. "Strategic Shift in Europe's Ties with India." *The Tribune*, April 29, 2022.

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/strategic-shift-in-europes-ties-with-india-390221>.

⁴⁰ Simant Shankar Bharti. "The European Union's Security Concerns and EU-South Asia Cooperation." *Scientific Journal of the Radom Academy of Economics* 6, no. 1 (January 2021): 11-27.

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The pandemic creates circumstances for online research, learning and training classes. The EU's higher institutions are collaborating with the Indian higher educational institutes. This can fulfil the people-to-people connectivity to achieve the educational goal. The strategic partnership is also focusing on the EU's research scholar, professors, and technician's partnership with the Indian professionals.⁴¹

The EU and India are meticulously cooperating on clean and renewable energy. Both sides focus to strengthen the policy on green and secure energy. The EU and India's cooperation on clean energy and climate is shaping the clean energy transition agenda and its implementation of the Paris Accords on climate change. The EU and India agreed to work jointly and adopted the rule and norms of the Paris Agreement on 8th May 2021. Thus, the EU and India are implementing the policy and strengthening the partnership under the Climate Partnership and Clean Energy.⁴² In recent years, the importance of maritime security is necessary to provide security and needs a dialogue against piracy. The second Maritime Security Dialogue holds in February 2022, provision for

⁴¹ Zane Šime. "The Role of Enhanced People-to-People Connectivity in the Implementation of the EU-India Roadmap." United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies, accessed September 21, 2022.

<https://cris.unu.edu/sites/cris.unu.edu/files/PB21.01%20-%20Zane%20Sime.pdf>.

⁴² PIB. "President of European Commission Visits ISA Headquarters." Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, April 24, 2022.

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1819589>.

an engagement mechanism was established and focuses on broad maritime security. The EU and India cooperation has taken on a strategic dimension and has evolved to include security cooperation and maritime security in the core agenda for further strategic partnership.⁴³ Jean-Louis Ville, Acting Director of the European Commission, says the EU is working on its strategy to reach the Euro 300 billion targets by 2027. He stated that the EU appears to be working with India to achieve the ultimate goal of EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025.⁴⁴

India and the EU have challenges to initiate mutual cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. Both sides don't get much success in terms of bilateral strategic partnerships. The Covid-19 pandemic supports accelerating bilateral cooperation between the two sides. Because India's pharmaceutical and medical research are the key area where the EU wants to strengthen its cooperation. In spite of these initiatives, both sides need to do more cooperative work in the maritime domain where India wants European support. France is strengthening strategic partnerships

⁴³ Captain Himadri Das. "The Maritime Security Dimension of the European Union-India Strategic Partnership: Review of the 2020-25 Roadmap." National Maritime Foundation. May 9, 2022.

<https://maritimeindia.org/the-maritime-security-dimension-of-the-european-union-india-strategic-partnership-review-of-the-2020-25-roadmap/>.

⁴⁴ India Blooms. "EU-India Connectivity Partnership Will Be Inclusive and Sustainable, Say Senior Officials from India and the EU at India@75 Celebration." India Blooms News Service. February 28, 2022.

<https://www.indiablooms.com/news-details/N/79650/eu-india-connectivity-partnership-will-be-inclusive-and-sustainable-say-senior-officials-from-india-and-the-eu-at-india-75-celebration.html>.

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beyond the EU and the French government also supports the EU's deeper involvement in the Indo-Pacific region to counter China's expansionism politics on the water as well. India and the EU together want to solve the major challenges in the region to start bilateral cooperation on the following issues, for example, the preservation of biodiversity, solar alliance and green energy issues, climate changes on population migration, blue economy, maritime cooperation, security threats and regional issues.⁴⁵

The principal challenges are counter-terrorism, pirates in the maritime domain, trafficking, conflict-resolution mechanism, the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and gender-related issues, human rights and the promotion of democracy are priorities sectors where India and the EU have to work together for peace & prosperity and human development. India has been suffering cross-border terrorism in Kashmir since 1990 and terrorist groups sabotaging human lives and sustainable development and a big obstacle to peace and social harmony across the world. The pirates also disturb sea routes of communications and oceanic trade. Human and drug trafficking are a burning question in front of global society to tackle this issue. In modern-day politics, states need to provide equal opportunities to every and each people without any form of discrimination. In a democratic nation, where people could enjoy fundamental rights, freedom of expression, voting rights, equal

⁴⁵ Robert Schuman Foundation, "Europe-India."

opportunity, legal support and basic human rights. There should be reinforced equality at work and in politics between men and women and no special treatment in the name of gender. There are many countries across the world that are still involved in wars and also involved in war phobia. Where people suffer and lose their lives from artillery and tank fire.

In the 21st century the need to build cooperation with like-minded countries to cement and shape the idea of an emerging multi-polar world. India and the EU recognized the concept of the multipolar world order. The EU is one of its largest economic partners of India and the EU member states are the leading destinations for Indian Exports. Brexit provided both opportunities and challenges to accelerate trade and economic relations with the EU and the UK, now the Indian government is to strengthen the strategic partnership with the EU and the UK as well. In April 2022, the President of the European Commission visited New Delhi and launched a “Trade and Technology Council” with a meeting with the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. Both sides address many challenges in trade, trusted security and technology, and deepening cooperation between the EU and India. “Mr. Ugo Astuto, EU’s Ambassador to India, said that Indian and European officials had ‘set the parameters and a clear roadmap’ for negotiations. He noted both India and the EU are expecting the

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deal to be struck before the Lok Sabha elections in India and the EU parliamentary elections, to be held in 2024”.⁴⁶

X. Conclusion

The blueprint of the India-EU strategic bilateral partnership is maturing the next step to accelerating the vision to achieve the ultimate goal. This article concludes that both sides' leaders need to understand on MoUs and their proper implementation of 118 points of this strategic partnership. There is a need to establish the proper single window system to assess the outputs of strategic cooperation. The current Indian government seems to do something special with the EU's commitment to India. The EU is working beyond the European continent for peace settlement, and conflict resolution, promoting the rule of laws and respecting minorities' rights across the world. India also advocates the same thing that the EU wants to establish in the world. The EU and India can contribute to the establishment of welfare states basically in third world countries. Child and family welfare are a burning issue to save the life of women and children, especially in the war zone and natural disaster-affected areas in the world. India has huge potential to work in the field space, pharmaceutical, manufacturing sector, and medical equipment. The EU and India can cooperate in emerging fields to strengthen the strategic

⁴⁶ Manoj Babu Buraga. ““Strategising’ the India-EU Partnership.” *Strategic Analysis* 46, no. 6 (2023): 614–630.

partnership. Cybercrime is an issue for India and the EU countries, where both sides need to work together to counter such kind of digital inconvenience.

The article further suggests that India-EU doesn't have continuity in its trade and investment since the bilateral agreement was signed between both sides. India is big democracy in the world and promotes the concept of welfare states. But the country has lots of internal problems in several parts, and India needs to address all the people's concerns and issues. The EU is able to mitigate the rural area issues in the context of strategic partnerships. India needs a strong trusted partner to counter the China-Pakistan nexus in the South Asia region. China's economic and trade route which is part of the BRI project called 'China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)' is passing through the disputed area of Jammu and Kashmir, India. Now this area is occupied by Pakistan, India is claiming and raising the issues at the international level to look for the issues. India needs support from the EU member countries. The Indo-Pacific is gaining attention in recent years, where the EU and India need to strengthen cooperation to counter the Chinese aggression in Ocean politics. As far as, in addition to the EU's engagement with India at a strategic level, India also has deep cooperation with the French side in the Pacific. India is agreed to work shoulder to shoulder with the EU on the issues of climate. This article indicates that it is necessary to save drinking water because India has huge sources of drinking water. The Indian government has to

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save the river water and needs to restrict the drainage water from the cities that falls into the rivers. The EU-India needs to work together to save the river's water.

India wants to invest in the European Union countries e.g., pharmaceuticals, construction, automobile, medical equipment, food processing, education, etc. On the other hand, China and US have an appropriate investment in the EU and non-EU European countries, respectively. India has to compete with China's BRI and '17+1' economic framework. China's flagship BRI projects spread from the Central and Eastern European countries to the Western part of Europe. China is 2nd largest economy in the world. The article suggests that India needs to do much trade and investment on a large scale to counter the Chinese initiatives in Europe. India's neighborhood first policy works in the South Asia region to compete with China's BRI in this region. This article concludes with the recommendation that India has to make better bilateral relations for a long time to accelerate the economy. This article also suggests that the outcome of this research will help further work on the EU-India bilateral partnership. China's geopolitical interest in the South Asian region contradicts India's interest and Indian political scenarios are too focused on the Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI). India has been criticizing the "China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor" (CPEC) which is crossing from the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, India, this region is under illegal occupation of Pakistan since 1948 and

also called Pak administered J& K. India is claiming that the CPEC which is part of the BRI project impinges on the issue of territorial integrity and sovereignty of India. The 17+1 framework of cooperation spreading in the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the EU and China has been contradicting in this region. There is complete gap in trade and investment at the export and import level and the CEE countries are suffering with huge trade deficit with China. On the other hand, India also accelerated economic and trade cooperation with its immediate neighbors and launched “India’s Neighboring First Policy” to counter China’s geopolitical move towards South Asia and its encircling policy.

There is an increasing push in Brussels to emerge as a geopolitical actor and India is a natural partner in many respects. India also wants to deepen its partnership with European partners in the region. There is widespread disappointment with the trajectory of China’s evolution and the US administration’s disdain for its Western allies is highly disruptive. At the same time, India is also emerging as a credible player beyond South Asia and the Indian Ocean, which has led the EU to look beyond its own periphery. This article suggests that the EU and India’s partnerships will grow as fruitful in the upcoming times because both sides need to support each other. The EU and India also coordinate closely on regional issues. However, it is not enough to simply reiterate that India and the EU are ‘natural partners’, one needs to focus on the areas and priorities highlighted in the

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strategy. India needs resources and expertise from the EU for its various priority areas, such as cybersecurity, urbanization, environmental regeneration and skills development. As the EU focuses on India, this new strategy is unique as it is the first time that the EU and its Member States have developed a holistic long-term strategic vision to redefine the partnership and revitalize it, it is necessary that nurture the cooperation for the future.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has indeed posed challenges for international relations, including the dynamics between the European Union (EU) and India. Initially, there were divergences in how different countries, including India, responded to Russia's actions. However, as the situation evolved and the EU maintained a strong stance against Russia's aggression, India appears to have been gradually aligning itself with the EU's approach. While India has historically maintained a nuanced position on international conflicts, it has shown signs of recognizing the severity of Russia's actions in Ukraine and the importance of upholding international norms and principles. Additionally, diplomatic engagements and dialogue between India and the EU likely play a crucial role in facilitating mutual understanding and cooperation on regional and global issues, despite initial divergences. By and large, while differences may have initially cast a shadow over the EU-India relationship regarding the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, it appears that

India has been gradually coming to terms with the EU's approach, signaling a potential convergence of interests and perspectives in addressing shared challenges on the global stage. The EU and India can work towards building a more resilient partnership that addresses shared challenges effectively. This includes not only geopolitical conflicts like the one between Russia and Ukraine but also other pressing issues such as terrorism, cybersecurity threats, climate change, and pandemics.

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