



The Partnership Shift: Analysing the European Union's Strategic Engagement with India

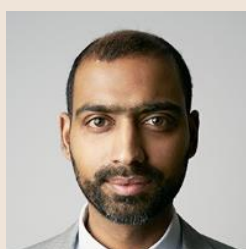
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Summary

- The framework for the European Union's (EU) future strategic engagement with India is outlined in the EU Strategy on India (EUIS). The EUIS signals the EU's preference for long-term engagement with India and upgrades the EU's approach to India from non-strategic to strategic. At the same time, the EUIS is a recognition that India is a regional power and a partner in a multipolar Asia as well as an offer by Europe to actively contribute to the modernisation of India. How successful long-term engagement will be, however, will depend on how well the EUIS aligns with the EU's foreign policy goals and converges with India's foreign policy priorities.
- In the light of the above, this report examines the EUIS from the perspective of how well aligned it is with the EU's guiding strategic document on external affairs: the EU Global Strategy (EUGS). A high degree of internal consistency with the EUGS would ensure better cohesion and ease implementation. Second, the report analyses the extent to which the EUIS converges with Indian foreign policy priorities, and the extent to which it does not, and discusses why this might be the case. It also makes policy recommendations on ensuring greater convergence.
- On internal alignment, the report concludes that of the five priorities mentioned in the EUGS, there is alignment with the EUIS on three (priority 1 on the security of the EU, priority 2 on resilience in the EU's neighbourhood and priority 5 on global governance), and partial alignment on two (priority 3 on conflict management and priority 4 on regional order).
- On convergence with India's priorities, the EU's and India's interests overlap in several areas mentioned in the EUIS. These include accelerating the transition to renewable energy, protecting a rules-based global order, counterterrorism, and promoting maritime security and cybersecurity.
- In other areas mentioned in the EUIS, in particular coordination and consultation in multilateral forums, World Trade Organisation (WTO) reform, and market access to particular sectors, it will be more demanding to achieve Indian alignment.
- The report also identifies some missed opportunities, such as for joint action on UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, scaling up the EU's support for the International Solar Alliance (ISA), and outlining ways to overcome the current gap in awareness about the EU in India, and vice versa.
- The report underlines that for greater strategic engagement to be a success, more interaction is required at different levels with multiple stakeholders, such as high-level officials, ministries, agencies, academics, and companies, to improve understanding of the policy preferences of both sides and thereby take the EU-India partnership to the next level.



Introduction

India's role in regional and world affairs is growing. The country's continuing economic growth, increased military and civil capabilities, and professed willingness to take a more active role in international institutions in order to safeguard its interests all affect how India engages with the region and how other actors engage with India. The process of India's emergence as a significant power has coincided with changes in the international order, spurred by China's actions and revised US policy priorities. These developments have led actors in Asia to review their partnerships and forms of cooperation. While there is competition between Asian powers in some areas, there is also a shared interest in transforming the international order to become more reflective of a world in which the interests of powers outside of the traditional West are respected. Asia is of great and growing importance to the security and economies of Europe. A new strategic environment in Asia calls for new visions of Europe's strategic engagement and long-term partnerships with actors in Asia.

Given this background, Europe is seeking ways to strengthen its role in Asia and clarify its propositions for and commitments to Asian partners. The European Union (EU) has attempted to do this by positioning itself as a "strategic actor", formulating a strategy to guide its external engagement. Concepts such as "strategy" and "strategic action" capture the intent and agency

grounded in long-term and planned commitments to achieve professed foreign policy goals. Strategising therefore implies an internal dimension to planning and pronunciation, through which "a plan to reach objectives" is formed.¹ Or, more specifically, strategising has been defined as "having the ability to scan the horizon, articulate coherent goals, and develop the means to achieve them".² The credibility of strategic acts relies on internal cohesion, which means that the various strategic pronouncements of the actor must contain common values, preferences, internal procedures and policy outputs.³ Such coherence can be called internal alignment between strategies. Given that a strategy seeks to identify and define the ways in which professed foreign policy goals can be achieved in alignment with other strategies, strategic action by an actor also contains a decisive element of interactivity. In order to achieve its professed goals, an actor must have the capacity to use policy instruments, such as diplomacy, negotiation or military means, while engaging with both competitors and partners.⁴ Hence, strategic action in foreign policy also implies the forming of alliances with actors with which there are shared goals.⁵ In sum, convergence with the foreign policy goals of partners increases the likelihood of successful strategic action.

The 2018 EU Strategy on India (EUIS) highlights multiple areas of potential cooperation and proposes several concrete actions. The document signals a clear intent on the part of the EU to raise considerably the level of strategic engagement with

¹ Smith, K.E. 2017. A European Union global strategy for a changing world? *International Politics*, Vol. 54: 503-518: 504.

² Dempsey, J. 2017. Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe blog. Judy Asks: Can the EU Ever Be Strategic? March 8, 2017. Retrieved from <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/68216?lang=en>. On the EU and strategy, see e.g. Engelbrekt, K. & Hallenberg, J. (eds) 2008. *The European Union and*

Strategy: An Emerging Actor. Routledge: London and New York.

³ Brattberg, E. & Rhinard, M. 2012. The EU as a global counter-terrorism actor in the making. *European Security*, Vol. 21, No. 4, December 2012, 557-577: 561.

⁴ Bretherton, C. & Vogler, J. 2005. *The European Union as a Global Actor*, Routledge: New York: 30.

⁵ Walt, S. 1987. *The Origins of Alliances*. Cornell University Press: New York.



India. For the EUIS to be implemented successfully, internal alignment is required between the EUIS and the EU's key strategic pronouncement, the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), as well as convergence with India's foreign policy priorities. This report analyses both aspects of this alignment. Section 1 compares the EUIS with the EUGS in order to draw out the level of internal consistency. Section 2 builds on a survey of and interviews with India experts to provide unique insights on the extent to which the EUIS converges with India's foreign policy goals. The report concludes by outlining recommendations for the EU as it sets out to implement the action points in the strategy.

Recent developments in EU-India relations

After years of frosty trade talks, four postponed annual summits and relations being described by many as lacking any strategic vision, relations between the EU and India gained new momentum in 2016. In March of that year, the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, visited Brussels for the annual India-EU summit. This advanced relations through the adoption of a Joint Statement and an Agenda for Action-2020.⁶

These documents demonstrated the political will to cooperate more closely on multiple issues. Three months later, the EU adopted its Global Strategy, which reiterates that India is a strategic partner.⁷ Nonetheless, the comparatively limited wording on EU-India relations in the EUGS signalled a lack of commitment to India. A call for a more consistent strategy on EU-India relations was made in a European Parliament resolution on the EU's relations with India adopted in June 2017.⁸ At the 2017 India-EU summit in October, Modi, the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, and the President of the European Commission, Jean Claude Juncker, endorsed implementation of the Agenda for Action-2020 and reiterated their willingness to enhance the India-EU strategic partnership.⁹ In addition, the summit confirmed a deeper mutual understanding on several issues, such as peace and security, multilateralism and global challenges. A new EU Strategy on India was published on November 20, 2018.¹⁰ It was endorsed by the EU member states at the Council on December 10, 2018.¹¹ India's Ministry of External Affairs welcomed the strategy and acknowledged numerous possible areas of cooperation, as well as the fact that the EU is India's largest trading

⁶ European Union 2016b. EU-India Agenda for Action-2020. 2016. EU-India Summit, Brussels, 30 March 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23671/20160330-agenda-action-eu-india.pdf>; European Union 2016c. Joint Statement 2016, 13th EU-India Summit, Brussels, 30 March 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23670/20160330-joint-statement-eu-india.pdf>.

⁷ European Union 2016a. Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy. June 2016. Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf.

⁸ European Parliament 2017. European Parliament resolution of 13 September 2017 on EU political relations with India. 2017/2025 (INI). Retrieved from <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type>

=TA&reference=P8-TA-2017-0334&language=EN&ring=A8-2017-0242

⁹ European Union 2017. INDIA-EU Joint Statement, 14th India-EU Summit, New Delhi, 6 October 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23515/eu-india-joint-statement.pdf>.

¹⁰ European Union 2018a. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. Elements for an EU strategy on India. JOIN (2018) 28 final. 20 November 2018. Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/jc_elements_for_an_eu_strategy_on_india_-_final_adopted.pdf.

¹¹ Council of the European Union 2018. Council conclusions on EU Strategy on India. 14638/18. 10 December 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37410/st14638-en18.pdf>.



partner.¹² The key takeaway from these recent developments is that the EU-India relationship is shifting from a relatively narrow focus on trade to address multiple policy areas.

The EU's strategic foreign policy efforts

Commentators are divided on the question of whether the EU has the ability to act strategically.¹³ Nonetheless, its strategic foreign policy actions entail the formulation of extensive plans on international relations, and setting objectives in line with its priorities.¹⁴ By upgrading a partnership to "strategic", the EU is advancing its relationship with an external partner and granting it special status.¹⁵ A strategic partnership agreement details the shared global interests between the EU and the partner and structures the interaction.¹⁶ The EU has strategic partnerships with ten states, among which are China, India, Japan, Russia, and the USA, and four international organisations.¹⁷ Even so, friendly formulations do not necessarily lead to strategic action in practice. Consequently, observers often lament the low impact of strategic partnerships on coalition-building and criticise the lack of

concrete outcomes, on the one hand, and strategic pronouncements and documents, on the other.¹⁸

From the European Security Strategy to the EU Global Strategy

Adopted in 2003, the European Security Strategy (ESS) was the first EU foreign policy strategy. The ESS articulated the EU's ambition to evolve into a strategic actor in world politics.¹⁹ However, it contained neither priorities nor a plan for the implementation of its strategic objectives.²⁰ The 2008 Implementation Report on the ESS therefore stressed that the EU should become "more strategic in our thinking and more effective and visible around the world".²¹ The Implementation Report was published in the midst of the eurozone crisis and only limited attention was paid to further strategic reflections. The EU's first *global* foreign policy strategy, the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), was adopted in 2016. The starting point of the EUGS is that: "Our Union is under threat. Our European project, which has brought unprecedented peace, prosperity and democracy is being

¹² Ministry of External Affairs 2018. Press release. India welcomes Joint Communication by the European Commission on India-Eu partnership. 26 November 2018. Retrieved from https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/30643/India_welcomes_Joint_Communication_by_the_European_Commission_on_India_EU_partnership__A_Partnership_for_Sustainable_Mo dernisation_and_Rulesbased_Globa

¹³ Dempsey, J. 2017.

¹⁴ Bendiek, A. & Kramer, H. 2010. The EU as a 'Strategic' International Actor: Substantial and Analytical Ambiguities. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 15: 453-474: 456.

¹⁵ Schade, D. 2017. Of insiders and outsiders: assessing EU strategic partnerships in their regional context. *Int Polit*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-017-0132-y>

¹⁶ Michalski, A. & Pan, Z. 2017. *Unlikely partners? China, the European Union and the Forging of a Strategic Partnership*. Palgrave Macmillan: 19.

¹⁷ Michalski & Pan. 2017: 13.

¹⁸ Renard, T. 2011. The Treachery of Strategies: A Call for True EU Strategic Partnerships, Egmont Paper 45, April 2011. Available online: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/5090188.pdf>

¹⁹ Mälksoo, M. 2016. From the ESS to the EU Global Strategy: external policy, internal purpose. *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 374-388.

²⁰ Smith, K.E. 2017. A European Union global strategy for a changing world? *International Politics*, 54, 503-518: 508.

²¹ European Union 2008. Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy. S407/08. 11 December 2008, 2. Retrieved from https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/reports/104630.pdf



questioned”.²² The EUGS reveals how the EU wishes to position itself in the contemporary world.²³ Because the EUGS stresses security and defence cooperation more clearly, it was suggested that the High Representative of the EU was considering transforming the EU into a “normal power” in global politics rather than a “normative” power.²⁴

The EUGS is more comprehensive than the ESS in terms of length and detail. This was as a result of several consultations held in European capitals attended by think tanks, civil servants, and politicians, and of having been negotiated over a much longer period of time. The EUGS also describes concrete actions arising from the strategy’s priorities, something which the previous strategy had neglected to do.²⁵ Another difference is in the singling out of strategic partners. While the ESS labelled Japan, China, Canada, and India as strategic partners, the EUGS confirms Japan and India as strategic partners in Asia while denying China that special status.²⁶ At a later stage, the EU reiterated its strategic partnership agreement with China, but it treats China with caution. China is currently perceived as a “systemic competitor”, as is indicated in the most recent annual review of the implementation of the EUGS.²⁷

How the EU’s Strategy on India aligns with the EU’s Global Strategy

For the EU’s actor-specific strategies to be successful, it is a prerequisite that they must be aligned with the overall strategic vision of the EU. In addition to creating confusion for external actors trying to understand the EU’s position, a lack of internal consistency among the EU’s strategies will make it harder for the EU institutions and member states to set the direction when engaging India. Hence, for the sake of successful diplomatic messaging, acceptance by the EU member states and institutions, and implementation by stakeholders, the strategic documents of the EU, such as the EUIS, should align with the EUGS. As an aside, it should be noted that the terminology in the EUGS, such as “principled pragmatism” and “strategic autonomy”, are used in Indian foreign policy and the sections on security are similar to how India sees the world.²⁸

The EUGS outlines five main priorities for the EU’s external engagement and relations. Various sub-themes are identified within these priorities. The EUIS proposes numerous policy areas and action points. These are analysed below in relation to the

²² European Union 2016a. Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign And Security Policy: 13. Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf

²³ Biscop, S. 2016. The EU Global Strategy: Realpolitik with European Characteristics. Egmont Security Policy Brief, No. 75 (June 2016); Mälksoo, M. 2016. From the ESS to the EU Global Strategy: external policy, internal purpose. *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 374-388.

²⁴ Smith, K.E. 2017. A European Union global strategy for a changing world? *International Politics*, 54: 514.

²⁵ Tocci, N. 2017. *Framing the EU Global Strategy: A Stronger Europe in a Fragile World*. Palgrave Macmillan: Cham: 86.

²⁶ European Union 2016a. Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign And Security Policy: 37-8. Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf

²⁷ European Union 2019. The European Union’s Global Strategy. Three Years On, Looking Forward: 15. Retrieved from https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_global_strategy_2019.pdf

²⁸ Authors’ interview with Patryk Kugiel, March 8, 2019; on strategic autonomy see e.g. Saran, S. 2017. *How India Sees the World*. Juggernaut Books: New Delhi: 2.



EUGS.²⁹ This assessment of the EUIS vis-à-vis the five main priorities of the EUGS shows that the EUIS is mostly but not always aligned with the EU's grand foreign policy plan.

EUGS priority 1: The security of the EU

This priority aims to safeguard and enhance the security of all Europeans.

Counterterrorism efforts are a key area of EUGS-priority 1, as is also the case in the EUIS. The EUIS mentions terrorism as a "major threat" for both sides and calls for strengthened technical cooperation to tackle radicalisation and terrorist funding. Second, priority 1 addresses cybersecurity, which is also addressed in the EUIS. The EUIS labels cybersecurity "a joint priority" and supports a multi-stakeholder internet governance model for a free, secure and peaceful cyberspace. Third, the EUGS stresses energy security. This is addressed in the EUIS through support for a diversification of energy sources, including renewable energy, and support for the International Solar Alliance (ISA). Fourth, priority 1 addresses EU-NATO relations. These are not mentioned in the EUIS, but this is to be expected since EU-NATO relations are specifically addressed in other EU documents and India is not a member of NATO. In addition, the EUIS emphasises strengthening the EU's brand in India as an operationalisation of strategic communications. Thus, there is consistency between the EUGS and the EUIS in the areas mentioned in relation to EUGS priority 1.

EUGS priority 2: State and societal resilience east and south of the EU

This priority treats enhancing the resilience of societies and states as a tool for fostering prosperity and democracy in the EU's neighbourhood. The EU's direct and extended southern and eastern neighbourhoods are shared with India in West Asia and the western Indian Ocean. This is reflected in how the EUIS correlates with EUGS priority 2. First, the EUIS follows the EUGS with regard to supporting human rights in its neighbourhood. This is detailed in the EUIS in the proposed cooperation with India on human rights within the United Nations to jointly promote gender equality, women's empowerment and the inclusion of young people. Second, EUGS priority 2 underlines promotion of the rule of law. With reference to this priority, the EUIS suggests working with India in third countries to consolidate democratic processes such as electoral and parliamentary institutions, as well as promoting the rule of law by jointly reaching out to various stakeholders, including civil society. Third, "a more effective migration policy" that addresses the various causes of migration is discussed as part of EUGS priority 2. The EUIS suggests closer cooperation with India on tackling irregular migration. Fourth, education and health form part of EUGS priority 2. The EUIS vaguely views health as an area of cooperation to be "expanded". Less cryptic is the suggestion of enhanced cooperation on education, through greater participation by Indian students in Erasmus+ programmes, advancing techniques for digital education, and developing "transferable skills and competences in degree programs". Fifth,

²⁹ The methodology applied is qualitative content analysis, in which the policy implications of the EUGS priorities and respective sub-themes are used as indicators and the EUIS is coded in accordance with these indicators. Our assessment of the EUIS vis-à-vis

the EUGS builds on our decision to label a match of 50% between the content of the EUIS and the indicators derived from the EUGS as "partial consistency" whereas "consistency" requires 80% matching content.



energy transition and the threat of climate change are examined in EUGS priority 2. By mentioning India's vulnerability to climate change, linked to greater incidence of air and water pollution, drought, flooding, water scarcity, heatwaves, and waste management, the EUIS proposes that the EU and India step up their cooperation on environmental challenges in line with the EUGS. Thus, there is consistency between the EUGS and the EUIS in the areas mentioned in relation to EUGS priority 2.

EUGS-priority 3: An integrated approach to conflicts

This priority demonstrates a broad approach to conflict and disputes. EUGS priority 3 refers to multilevel and multilateral approaches to building peace and stability, and highlights engagement on peacebuilding and strengthening human security. The EUIS does not mention human security but proposes to "Join forces on post-conflict institution building and reconciliation processes in third countries". Disputes and conflicts receive only limited coverage in the EUIS, which underlines the importance of the UN and expresses the EU's wish to enhance cooperation in the G20 and to open up a channel of dialogue on multilateral issues that addresses both security and economic aspects. The only UN Security Council resolution mentioned in the EUGS is resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. India's all-female peacekeeping unit, which served in Liberia in 2007–2016, is often considered best practice for women's participation in peacekeeping. However, the EUIS misses the opportunity to signal to India that the EU is supportive of the resolution.³⁰ Thus,

³⁰ UN News Centre. 2016. Hailed as "role models", all-female Indian police unit departs UN mission in Liberia. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/hailed-'role-models'-all-female-indian-police-unit-departs-un-mission-liberia>

there is partial consistency between the EUGS and the EUIS in the areas mentioned in relation to EUGS priority 3.

EUGS-priority 4: Cooperative regional orders

EUGS priority 4 focuses on regional cooperation on a variety of issues. The EUGS mentions support for regional organisations and this is addressed by the EUIS, which highlights the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association. The EUIS also addresses the EUGS objective on regional stability in the Middle East by suggesting joint efforts to promote a two-state solution in the Middle East Peace Process. In addition, the EUGS proposes that the EU should scale-up its activities in Asia in multiple policy areas, such as infrastructure and digital connectivity. The EUIS proposes further regional cooperation efforts in the areas of maritime transport, infrastructure, aviation, rail and road safety, the blue economy, privacy rights, and space. On connectivity, the EUIS notes that "connectivity should be sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based" and ultimately be "environmentally, economically, socially, and fiscally sustainable...while respecting international standards". This emphasis is aligned with both the EUGS and the EU's Connectivity Strategy, which underlines transparency and competition as key components of connectivity.³¹ Under priority 4, the EUGS emphasises as a priority the requirement to

³¹ European Union. 2018b. Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank. Connecting Europe and Asia - Building blocks for an EU Strategy. JOIN (2018) 31 final. 19 September 2018.



maintain a non-violent Arctic. Despite the fact that India has shown an interest in the Arctic and was awarded observer status in the Arctic Council in 2013, the Arctic is not addressed in the EUIS. Whereas the EUGS states that the EU wishes to sign free trade agreements with strategic partners, including India and Japan, and eventually to sign an agreement with ASEAN, the EUIS does not address the potential for a future free trade agreement. There is thus only partial consistency between the EUGS and the EUIS in the areas mentioned in relation to EUGS priority 4.

EUGS-priority 5: Global governance for the twenty-first century

EUGS priority 5 is wide-ranging and concerns multiple aspects of global affairs. First, it puts maintaining the rules-based global order characterised by multilateralism and the United Nations at its core as a key objective, which correlates well with the EUIS. Second, the EUGS reaffirms that reform of the UN and its Security Council is a political objective. The EUIS also reiterates the need for the UN, including the Security Council, to be reformed. Third, the EUGS mentions continuing support for UN peacekeepers. On this point, the EUIS proposes the development of joint projects on training for third parties and that each side should invite the other to its peacekeeping training. Fourth, the EUGS lists implementing Agenda 2030 under priority 5. The EUIS expresses a wish to identify common priorities on Agenda 2030 with India and to cooperate on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Fifth, EUGS priority 5 discusses implementing the Paris Agreement, which the EUIS also addresses by proposing knowledge-sharing on strategies to reduce emissions. Sixth,

reforming the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is mentioned under EUGS priority 5. According to the EUIS, the EU wishes to modernise the rules-based multilateral trading system centred on the WTO together with India. Seventh, the EU prioritises the promotion of global norms such as non-proliferation and human rights under EUGS priority 5. While the EUIS outlines a willingness to cooperate on non-proliferation, disarmament, export controls and nuclear safety, however, no concrete action points are proposed. Eighth, the EUGS discusses strengthening support for the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The EUIS confirms that the EU and India are “strong supporters” of UNCLOS and links it with cooperation on maritime security and non-traditional security threats. Ninth, the EUGS stresses cooperation with global partners such as the UN, ASEAN and the G20. The EUIS proposes action points on all three, and states that the EU wishes to improve coordination in the UN, exchange experience on regional structures with the ASEAN Regional Forum and seek to align EU-India positions within the G20. One EUGS policy that is not addressed in the EUIS, however, is enhancing support for the UN Human Rights Council, the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. Thus, there is consistency between the EUGS and the EUIS in areas mentioned in relation to EUGS priority 5.

How the EU’s Strategy on India converges with India’s foreign policy priorities

The EUIS is not an agreement but an internal document endorsed by both the EU institutions and the EU member states. Hence, it is unclear to what extent India has

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[_building_blocks_for_an_eu_strategy_2018-09-19.pdf](#)



accepted the EU's action points. Nonetheless, as the EUIS clearly signals the EU's intention to deepen cooperation with India, it is unlikely to include positions that are entirely contrary to India's interests. In fact, the EUIS was positively received in India. One observer consulted suggested that the content "resonated quite well with the Indian side" and that "it is clearly political and strategic".³² However, as indicated above, although the EUIS and its reception illustrate a shift in EU-India relations, the effects of this shift will become tangible only after the proposals have been implemented.³³ As mentioned above, the likelihood of successful implementation of the EUIS is related not only to the level of internal consistency between the EU's strategic pronouncements, but also to the extent to which the EU's stated action points align with India's foreign policy priorities.

The EUIS consists of an introduction, a context description, and three main sections: (i) prosperity through sustainable modernisation; (ii) security and stability through the rules-based global order; and (iii) a more joined-up and streamlined approach to India. The three sections examine various policy areas and propose concrete action points on the EU-India partnership. Following the structure of the three main sections, the areas in which the EU's and India's interests converge, as well as areas where Indian acceptance is less

likely due to divergent EU and Indian priorities, are analysed below.³⁴ The analysis is based on a survey and interviews with India experts affiliated to the Europe India Research and Dialogue Network (EIRDN).

I. Prosperity through sustainable modernisation

Section 1 of the EUIS signals the EU's readiness to actively engage with India's ongoing transformation. Throughout India's continuing modernisation, infrastructure and especially the area of urban physical connectivity provide major opportunities for the EU.³⁵ In addition to technical solutions to the establishment of smart cities, innovation in the energy sector and climate change adaptation are also providing opportunities for cooperation.³⁶

There is untapped potential in this regard in sustainable connectivity.³⁷ This raises the possibility of deepened collaboration between India and the EU on economically and ecologically sustainable infrastructure not only in India, but across the Asia-Pacific.³⁸ Sustainability has a purchase in India since the country has been a major player in shaping the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which create

³² Authors' interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019.

³³ Stefania Benaglia, April 10, 2019, written communication with the authors.

³⁴ Some areas and proposed policy proposals in the EUIS, such as 5G on automatisisation, and collaboration between Europol and its Indian counterpart, were not explicitly mentioned by the experts consulted. These are therefore not elaborated on in this report, but the EU should not ignore them. In particular, the question of 5G in relation to the geopolitics of technical standards is becoming increasingly important for the EU, see e.g. Fägersten, B. & Rühlig, T. 2019. China's standard power and its

geopolitical implications for Europe. UI Brief no.2, March 2019.

³⁵ Authors' interview with Patryk Kugiel, March 8, 2019.

³⁶ Survey response by Isabelle Saint-Mezard; authors' interview with Patryk Kugiel, March 8, 2019; Bart Gaens and Emma Hakala, March 17, 2019, written communication with the authors.

³⁷ Bart Gaens and Emma Hakala, March 17, 2019, written communication with the authors; Stefania Benaglia, April 10, 2019, written communication with the authors.

³⁸ Bart Gaens and Emma Hakala, March 17, 2019, written communication with the authors.



opportunities for closer cooperation on global challenges.³⁹

In connection with all the above, implementation of the Paris Agreement and support for the International Solar Alliance (ISA), a “flagship” initiative of the Modi government, are key aspects in facilitating India’s energy transition.⁴⁰ The French- and Indian-led ISA aims to promote the development and expansion of solar energy worldwide by gathering together 75 countries. Whereas in the beginning membership was exclusively open to countries with a high degree of potential in solar energy, membership has since been expanded to all members of the United Nations. For instance, the Netherlands and United Kingdom have signed the ISA Framework Agreement and become members of the ISA. One expert stated that this global outreach means that the ISA has the potential to enhance India’s soft power in the world.⁴¹ At the same time, India expects European investment to accelerate its energy transition from coal to renewable energy sources.⁴²

Furthermore, given the long and successful cooperation on research and innovation, this is bound to be a key area in the years ahead.⁴³ It could also be extended to include space cooperation, especially as satellites become increasingly important for India.⁴⁴ Similarly, the Indian strategic community currently views technology, investment and financing as the most important foreign contributions to India’s development.⁴⁵ In

this regard, it should be mentioned that while data protection is a much-discussed topic in India, the EU’s adoption of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has caused confusion in India.⁴⁶ There is therefore a need to clarify the GDPR for the corporate sector.

However, deepened cooperation faces challenges in the sectors mentioned in section 1 of the EUIS. Although this section contains a European offer to actively engage, India’s history of protectionism could affect the level of engagement. The need for difficult conversations on free trade and access thresholds to particular sectors of the Indian market will inevitably resurface. Observers have noted that: “India seems to think that a free trade agreement with the EU is not in its national interest” since India sees itself as having an economy “that still needs to protect itself from being overrun by countries and markets far more developed”.⁴⁷ Other observers were more optimistic and viewed a bilateral investment treaty based on “protection and promotion” as an option for stimulating trade.⁴⁸

The EU also runs the risk that India might turn to other partners, such as Japan, if it fails to deliver or is difficult to cooperate with.⁴⁹ Therefore, the EU’s own bureaucracy and complex decision-making systems could cause confusion and must be considered a challenge too.

³⁹ Authors’ interview with Britta Petersen, March 20, 2019.

⁴⁰ Authors’ interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019; authors’ interview with Britta Petersen, March 20, 2019.

⁴¹ Authors’ interview with Shada Islam, April 10, 2019.

⁴² Authors’ interview with Britta Petersen, March 20, 2019.

⁴³ Survey response from Christian Wagner.

⁴⁴ Authors’ interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019.

⁴⁵ Jaishankar, D. 2019. “Survey of India’s Strategic Community”. Brookings India IMPACT Series No. 032019-01. March 2019, 9. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Survey-of-India’s-Strategic-Community.pdf>

⁴⁶ Authors’ interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019.

⁴⁷ Authors’ interview with Britta Petersen, March 20, 2019.

⁴⁸ Authors’ interview with Shada Islam, April 10, 2019.

⁴⁹ Survey response from Gareth Price.



II. Security and stability through the rules-based global order

The EUIS makes clear that the EU views India as a strategic partner, not just a development or trade partner.⁵⁰ Although both the EU and India promote the rules-based global order, there are some potential difficulties contained within this section of the EUIS. Multilateral coordination is said to be key to taking the strategic partnership further, but there is a lack of institutionalised dialogue on multilateral issues and India has traditionally often sided with Russia and China on global security, particularly on their reluctance to accept resolutions suggested to United Nations Security Council concerning interventions. Even though both India and the EU are in favour of a reformed WTO, longstanding divergent views on market access might hamper any deepened cooperation on global trade reform. WTO reform requires additional dialogue since India wishes to maintain its developing country status, limit access for e-commerce, and focus on labour mobility.⁵¹ Nonetheless, a continuation of joint efforts to reform the WTO Appellate Body, which manages dispute settlement, could be a starting point for full-scale reform.⁵² Different provisions on human rights might also prove to be a sticking point for the partnership.

First and foremost, cooperation on terrorism is a key issue, particularly since

the attack in Pulwama on February 14, 2019, which killed more than 40 Indian security personnel. Joint actions could include countering terrorist financing and technical cooperation to counter violent extremism and radicalisation.⁵³ There is considerable potential to enhance maritime security and joint maritime surveillance operations, particularly in the Indian Ocean with its increasing number of non-traditional and traditional security challenges.⁵⁴ The EU could promote regional maritime security through cooperation with India's new Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) as well as military-to-military cooperation.⁵⁵ The EU could scale up its role as a regional maritime security provider to ensure that traditional trade routes are not disrupted. Another security component with great potential is cybersecurity, which could become a key area for the partnership as both the EU and India adapt to the challenges of the digital age.⁵⁶ The existing EU-India Cyber Dialogue constitutes an important forum for deepening cooperation on cybersecurity.

Cooperation on third countries could also be enhanced, especially on Afghanistan and the African nations.⁵⁷ India has long provided democratic and electoral training for officials in third countries, so there is

⁵⁰ Authors' interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019.

⁵¹ Authors' interview with Shada Islam, April 10, 2019.

⁵² Authors' interview with Shada Islam, April 10, 2019.

⁵³ Survey response from Isabelle Saint-Mezard; authors' interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019; authors' interview with Britta Petersen, March 20, 2019; Bart Gaens and Emma Hakala, March 17, 2019, written communication with the authors.

⁵⁴ Survey response from Gareth Price; authors' interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019; Bart Gaens and Emma Hakala, March 17, 2019, written

communication with the authors; authors' interview with Britta Petersen, March 20, 2019.

⁵⁵ Bart Gaens and Emma Hakala, March 17, 2019, written communication with the authors.

⁵⁶ Authors' interview with Britta Petersen, March 20, 2019; survey response from Tamas Gerocs; survey response from Isabelle Saint-Mezard; Bart Gaens and Emma Hakala, March 17, 2019, written communication with the authors.

⁵⁷ Survey response from Christian Wagner; Survey response from Tamas Gerocs; authors' interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019; authors' interview with Patryk Kugiel, March 8, 2019.



considerable potential in what the EUIS calls “consolidating democracy”.⁵⁸

One issue that is not mentioned in the EUIS is United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. India was the first country to deploy an all-women UN peacekeeping force, which implies that there may be untapped potential for the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).⁵⁹

III. A more joined-up and streamlined approach towards India

The EUIS confirms the need for more flexible relations as well as increased knowledge about the EU among Indian diplomats and experts. The EU and India should “focus more on concrete outcomes from this cooperation to show both Europeans and Indians the benefits of a closer cooperation”.⁶⁰ A key opportunity for the EU member states is to arrange public diplomacy events together with the EU Delegation in India, and thereby minimise the competition for awareness between the EU Delegation and the member states in India. Similarly, India and EU member states sometimes prefer to act bilaterally instead of involving the EU Delegation.⁶¹ Coordination among EU member states’ diplomats and the EU Delegation in New Delhi is essential in order to speak with one voice simultaneously as EU member states also have bilateral relations with India.

The existing knowledge gap about the EU across India presents a major challenge.⁶² Among experts and diplomats, exchanges and track 1.5 dialogues will be crucial tools for increasing understanding of the EU. The

public and corporate sectors must also be taken into consideration. One risk is insufficient funding for exchanges and information-sharing projects, which would harm the prospects for EU-India ties.⁶³ At the same time as the knowledge gap about the EU in India presents a challenge, there is also a need for more India research in Europe. The knowledge gap must therefore be addressed in India as well as Europe.

Recommendations on implementation of the EU’s strategy on India

1. Through the European Investment Bank, the EU should increase its financial support for India’s clean energy transition. Increased engagement with the International Solar Alliance (ISA), including funding and offering the services of EU diplomats to ISA’s headquarters, would be beneficial for both sides. Increased engagement with the ISA would also benefit the EU’s own energy transition.
2. The EU should seek sector-based trade agreements with India rather than an ambitious free trade agreement (FTA). A starting point could be an agreement on trade in services, as India wishes to send technical engineers to the EU and the EU wishes to simplify its retail business in India.⁶⁴ This new approach would facilitate a trade and economic partnership between the EU and India without getting trapped in FTA negotiations. Although an FTA is a priority for the EU, this step-by-step approach to deepening trade relations could bring concrete results out of the trade negotiations. There is little reason to rush

⁵⁸ Authors’ interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019.

⁵⁹ Authors’ interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019.

⁶⁰ Authors’ interview with Patryk Kugiel, March 8, 2019.

⁶¹ Survey response from Gareth Price.

⁶² Authors’ interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019; authors’ interview with Patryk Kugiel, March 8, 2019.

⁶³ Survey response from Christian Wagner.

⁶⁴ Authors’ interview with Shada Islam, April 10, 2019.



into a comprehensive FTA when the EU and India could enter into preferential trade agreements.

3. The EU should introduce a high-level dialogue on trade and investment that addresses different dimensions of regulations and policy preferences in order to reduce obstacles.⁶⁵ Relevant participants would include the EU's High Representative and the Indian Minister of External Affairs as well as actual policymakers, including representatives of the Directorate General for Trade at the European Commission, the Taxation and Customs Union of the European Commission, and the Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

4. The EU should upgrade dialogues to strategic dialogues gathering both the EU's High Representative and Indian Minister of External Affairs, as well as levels of Joint Secretaries, and working group level between Indian ministries and the European External Action Service (EEAS).⁶⁶ Such a strategic dialogue would facilitate conversations on a wide range of issues where neither the EU nor India have been consistent over the past years.

5. The EU should initiate issues-based trilaterals, i.e. triangular cooperation with India and other strategic and like-minded partners, such as select African countries, Japan, Singapore or Australia. One example would be an EU-India-Japan dialogue.⁶⁷ These trilaterals could be a high-level or Track II dialogue.⁶⁸ Given India's history of conducting foreign policy in trilaterals, these formations could facilitate strategic

outlooks while also harmonising policies on specific issues, such as connectivity, development, and maritime security. Although there are multiple potential partners, the EU should prioritise its strategic partners in order to add value to these strategic partnerships.

6. The EU should institutionalise mechanisms to facilitate active interactions with Indian officials and diplomats on agenda-setting and ongoing negotiations in multilateral forums. As the precise arrangements for these meetings can differ in different multilateral forums, the EU and India should conduct a strategic dialogue on how to institutionalise these conversations.

7. The EU should evaluate and improve the programmes on policymaking within the EU for Indian diplomats and experts, and make the relationship more flexible and results-oriented.⁶⁹ While this is a laudable ambition, it will require a shared understanding of what it would mean. This is therefore a topic for strategic dialogue between the EU and India.

8. The EU should invest in public diplomacy to increase its visibility across India. Coordinated by the EU Delegation, both a digital and a traditional presence across India will be required in order to increase the EU's outreach. These activities would involve arranging public cultural events with speakers with a wide range of expertise, such as artists, authors, scientists, and various public figures, invited from different parts of Europe. Another option might be to organise competitions for innovative Indian

⁶⁵ Authors' interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019; survey response from Tamas Gerocs; authors' interview with Britta Petersen, March 20, 2019.

⁶⁶ Authors' interview with Patryk Kugiel, March 8, 2019; authors' interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019.

⁶⁷ Authors' interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019; Bart Gaens and Emma Hakala, March 17, 2019, written communication with the authors.

⁶⁸ An example of a Track II trilateral is the existing India Trilateral Forum (ITF), which brings together Europeans, Indians, and Americans.

⁶⁹ Survey response from Gareth Price; survey response from Isabelle Saint-Mezard; authors' interview with Garima Mohan, March 8, 2019.



youth. Digitally, the EU could use social media, including WhatsApp, as a tool for interacting with young Indians on outreach projects.

9. The EU should allocate more funding for studies of European-Indian strategic relations, thereby building capacity within the EU. The ability to conduct prudent foreign policy is facilitated by intellectual thought and reasoning about the trends in EU-Indian strategic relations. By investing in research on EU-Indian relations, the EU would be investing in avenues of cooperation with a country that is projected to become the most populous in the world in less than a decade.

Conclusions

The EUIS recognises India as an important power in a multipolar Asia. The language in the EUIS also confirms the new momentum in EU-India relations.⁷⁰ This new momentum coincides with the increased strategic capacity of the EU following on from publication of the 2016 EUGS and the 2018 EUIS. This study shows that there is a high degree of consistency between the EUIS and the EUGS, which means that the content of the EUIS reflects the EU's strategic and political objectives in the

world. At the same time as India is stepping up its game in global affairs, the EU is willing to engage on multiple fronts ranging from active involvement in India's modernisation efforts to joint action to enhance security and stability, and coordination in multilateral forums. As the report outlines, there are many areas in which Indian and EU interests converge. Even though some areas will require more effort and energy to understand each other's policy preferences, the study illustrates the vast potential for the future of EU-Indian relations. At the same time, the EU must closely monitor that India is conforming to its democratic constitution and respecting human rights. The EU must also be realistic in its expectations, as India is an emerging global power that faces many domestic challenges and has multiple partners with which to engage. It is of the utmost importance that the EU keeps India on its agenda through an ambitious implementation of the EUIS and engages with the recently re-elected Indian government. The next tasks for the EU will be to intensify its internal activity on identifying how to move the agenda forward, and to engage in strategic consultations with India on how to deliver the EUIS.

⁷⁰ Authors' interview with Patryk Kugiel, March 8, 2019.

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