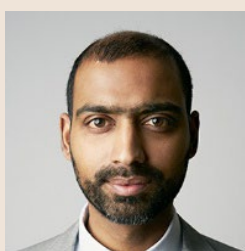




Circles of EU-India Engagement: How Member States Cooperate with India on Global Issues

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Summary

- The report builds on two unique surveys of a group of European and Indian observers with deep insights into EU-India relations, as well as analyses of official documents to detail how EU member states engage with India on global issues and India's response.
- There is growing interest in cooperation with India on global issues, among the EU member states collectively and the member states individually. The current momentum is partly due to the changing circumstances and increased uncertainty in world affairs, and partly due to mutual perceptions of shared values. At the same time, there is also growing scholarly interest in EU-India relations. Analysis, however, has focused on German and French engagement with India, as well as that of the EU institutions, rather than the rest of the EU member states.
- By examining the preferences and perspectives of a cross section of eight small and medium-sized EU member states, this report explores engagement with India and the EU member states through a wider lens. The authors categorise EU-India relations as a first and second circle. The first circle encompasses the EU institutions, France and Germany, while the second circle captures small and medium-sized EU member states.
- India engages with EU member states on a wide range of global issues, conducting diplomatic talks in different formats with different member states on a number of issues ranging from security and development policy to cybersecurity and renewable energy. Since 2014, the level of political attention paid by India to "second circle" member states has been almost as high as that paid to the major actors. Nonetheless, there are still variations among the member states and some manage to attract India's attention better than others. There is also a broader trend for the member states studied to align their engagement with India's agenda.
- While several factors foster cooperation on global issues, notably China's growing global footprint, engagement is primarily driven by the quest for business opportunities and awareness of India's global weight and influence. That said, a lack of both political priority and institutional capacity impede deeper ties.
- The report finds that some EU member states engage with India on global issues more through the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy than their own bilateral relationships. Given the opportunity to engage at both the EU level and in their bilateral relationships, EU member states tilt towards the EU level, whereas India tilts towards the bilateral level.
- There is untapped potential for second circle EU member states to engage with India on issues related to the digital age, such as 5G, Artificial Intelligence and cybersecurity. For demanding high-profile issues, such as human rights, the EU level remains the primary arena of engagement as the EU collectively is more influential than EU's small and medium-sized member states individually.
- To realise the full potential of the EU-India strategic partnership, both the member states and India must act in a more coordinated manner and increase their parliamentary diplomacy.



Introduction

The European Union (EU) and India find themselves in shared circumstances. Both actors support common international responses to many of today's global challenges at a time when multilateral cooperation has become more fragile. Both are increasingly committed to push back where Chinese activities are found to run counter to their respective interests or values, but also to stand behind international agreements called into question – at least until recently – by the United States. Importantly, both the EU and India are seeking to act in their own right in a world where a growing US-Chinese rivalry is increasingly affecting global politics.¹

Europe and India's shared reading of the current challenges in world affairs is reflected in a growing interest in Indo-European cooperation. Europe-India relations have gone through several phases. For decades, Europe primarily viewed relations with New Delhi through the lens of poverty reduction and development cooperation, while political cooperation was generally limited. India's strong economic growth following reforms in the 1990s has provided the impetus for a new narrative in the West on India as an emerging economy. The emergence of India as a nuclear power in 1998, followed by a programme of modernisation of its armed forces, also drew attention to its increasing military capabilities. Nonetheless, there was still a reluctance on both sides regarding a comprehensive political partnership.

Europe had hitherto played a relatively small part in India's foreign policy and was often seen as a junior partner in the US-led West. Europe's perceived lack of coordinated positions (or competences) on the issues closest to India's heart influenced New Delhi's assessment. Europe, and the EU institutions, in particular, was also viewed by India as out of touch with *realpolitik* in Asia, especially in relation to the growing economic and military might of China.

In recent years, however, the EU and India have pinned higher hopes on becoming truly strategic partners on global issues, although frustration remains in areas such as trade negotiations and security cooperation is limited. India has established comprehensive strategic partnerships with Germany and France, and the 2004 EU-India strategic partnership has become increasingly substantial. The EU's Strategy on India, as well as its modified stance on China and ambitions to become more "geopolitical", now place it in greater alignment with India on global challenges.

However, in discussions on European engagement with India on global issues, and vice versa, the focus has been squarely on a first circle of actors: either the EU institutions or the major actors of Germany, France and, until recently, the United Kingdom. The EU mostly consists of small and medium-sized member states that engage more or less actively with emerging or existing global powers either bilaterally or through the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). As is discussed below, we have called these actors "second

¹ See Ministry of External Relations. 2019. External Affairs Minister's speech at the 4th Ramnath Goenka Lecture, 2019. Retrieved from <https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/32038/External+Affairs+Ministers+speech+at+the+4th+Ramnath+Goenka+Lecture+2019>; European Council 2020. "Strategic autonomy for Europe: the aim of our generation".

Speech by President Charles Michel to the Bruegel think tank. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/09/28/l-autonomie-strategique-europeenne-est-l-objectif-de-notre-generation-discours-du-president-charles-michel-au-groupe-de-reflexion-bruegel/>



circle states” in order to distinguish them from the major actors in the first circle. The research literature on EU-India relations has very little to say about possible patterns in how second circle member states, which have a stake in the world order but not necessarily the capabilities to influence it individually, engage with India as an emerging global power. This is true seen from the perspective of these states’ general approaches to India, and of activities connected to particular issues. It is also true regardless of whether they choose to act bilaterally or to go through the EU.

This knowledge gap is unfortunate since the EU’s second circle states are supportive of an active India on the global stage, and sometimes play an outsized role in global affairs, especially through the EU.² As is discussed in more detail below, we have sought insights on relations with India from observers selected from states from eight European subregions, and compared these with the views of Indian experts on India’s engagement with EU member states. This numerically limited but cross sectional approach has enabled us to elevate the discussion above individual states to a more aggregate level of analysis while also providing a perspective from India. Country-specific examples are provided as appropriate.

The focus is on what are commonly referred to as global challenges, that is, agenda items in world affairs that demand international cooperation and are not typically bilateral issues, such as consular matters or cultural exchanges. Engagement is defined as all the main forms of interaction between states, ranging from structured and formalised cooperation –

such as joint projects, agreements and memoranda of understanding, as well as joint working groups and committees and so on – to political dialogue and coordination (exchanges of visits, joint statements, press statements and so on) at various levels.

This study therefore addresses three questions:

- 1) How is engagement on global issues structured between the small and medium-sized EU member states and India?
- 2) What factors drive or impede engagement between these states and India?
- 3) Do small and the medium-sized European states or India prefer bilateral or EU-level engagement on global issues?

Locating the study in the literature

While the research field of European-Indian political and strategic relations is growing it has for the past two decades been focused on the EU’s institutions and a limited number of EU member states. Scholarly interest in the EU-India partnership grew following the signing of a strategic partnership between the EU and India in 2004, and the emergence of more pronounced strategic thinking on Asia by the EU.³ This was an explorative phase, in which the EU-India scholarship clarified India’s and the EU’s respective positions in

² Busse et al. 2020. EU Coalition Explorer, European Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved from <https://ecfr.eu/special/eucoalitionexplorer/>

³ Bava, Ummu Salma. 2008. “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 Álvaro de Vasconcelos, *European Union Institute for Security Studies*, 105-113.



an attempt to assess the prospects for successful cooperation.⁴

Current research on European-Indian relations has entered a new phase. This reflects heightened ambitions for the partnership following the EU-India summit in 2016, the EU Strategy on India and India's positive response to the EU's proposition.⁵ Scholars and analysts have largely stressed a new mutual understanding between the two actors and a rekindled interest in the strategic partnership. A common observation is that international cooperation has been enabled by the ambitions of both the EU and India to become global actors, coinciding with growing uncertainty about China's activities and US global leadership. This new phase in the EU-India literature can be roughly divided into two strands: studies of bilateral EU-India relations and research into a handful of EU member states' bilateral relations with India.⁶

Rajendra Jain's observations on the "narrow circles" through which EU-India relations are structured can serve as inspiration for a conceptualisation of EU-India engagement.⁷ The first circle described by Jain encompasses the then three major powers in Europe: France, Germany and the UK. A

modified version of the first circle to contemporary conditions replaces the UK with the EU institutions. In a second circle comes the smaller and medium-sized member states that have an active agenda on cooperation with India but only limited bandwidth to expand it. Third comes the small EU member states that have not made their priorities or intentions to work with India explicit. However, Jain provides neither explicit theory nor empirics to explain how to differentiate between the second and third circles. Our modification therefore places all the EU member states apart from France and Germany in a second circle. Figure 1 plots the second circle states as closer to or further away from the first circle depending on the intensity of their engagement with India, using data on visits, trade and formats for political dialogue.

Thanks to Jain and other contributors to this new phase of the Europe-India literature, we are now better placed to know the possibilities and pitfalls of the EU's engagements with India, albeit seen from the perspective of first circle actors in Brussels, Berlin and Paris. We also know a little about how some second circle states perceive their bilateral relations with India – and India's view.

⁴ See e.g. Abhyankar, Rajendra M. *India and the European Union: A Partnership for All Reasons*, *India Quarterly*, Vol. 65 (4), 393-404; Jain, Rajendra K. 2009. *India and the European Union: Perceptions and Policies*, Paper presented at the European studies in Asia (ESiA) Network Public Panel, *Asia-Europe Institute*, University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 19 June 2009, 1-5; Wülbers, Shazia Aziz. 2010. *The Paradox of EU-India Relations: Missed Opportunities in Politics Economics, Development Cooperation, and Culture*. Plymouth: Lexington Books; Parel, Luis and Vijay Sakhuja. 2012. *The EU-India partnership: time to go strategic?* European Union Institute for Security Studies. 196 pp; Wagner, Christian. 2015. "Western Europe" in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy* edited by David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, Srinath Raghavan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 495-508.

⁵ Aspengren, Henrik Chetan and Axel Nordenstam. 2019. *The Partnership Shift: Analysing*

the European Union's Strategic Engagements with India. *The Swedish Institute of International Affairs*, UI Paper no. 9, July 2019, 1-20; Mohan, Garima. 2019. *Prospects for the New EU Strategy on India: Game Changer of Business as Usual?* *Asie. Visions*, No. 108, Ifri, September 2019, 1-26; Mukherjee, Bhaswati. 2019. *India and EU: An Insider's View*. Vij Books India; Sachdeva, Gulshan. 2019. *Challenges in Europe*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan; Lidén, Emil. 2020. *Securing a Shared Neighbourhood: The European Union and India as Partners for Security in Africa*. *The Swedish Institute of International Affairs*, UI Brief no.1 2020, 1-14.

⁶ See e.g. Kugiel, Patryk. 2013. *What Does India Think About Poland?* *Polish Institute of International Affairs*, PISM Policy Paper, No. 15 (63), June, 1-7.; Campos Palarea, Rubén and Jayshree Sengupta 2017. *Spain and India: seeking stronger bilateral relation*. *Real Instituto Elcano*, Working Paper 2, November 2017, 1-42.

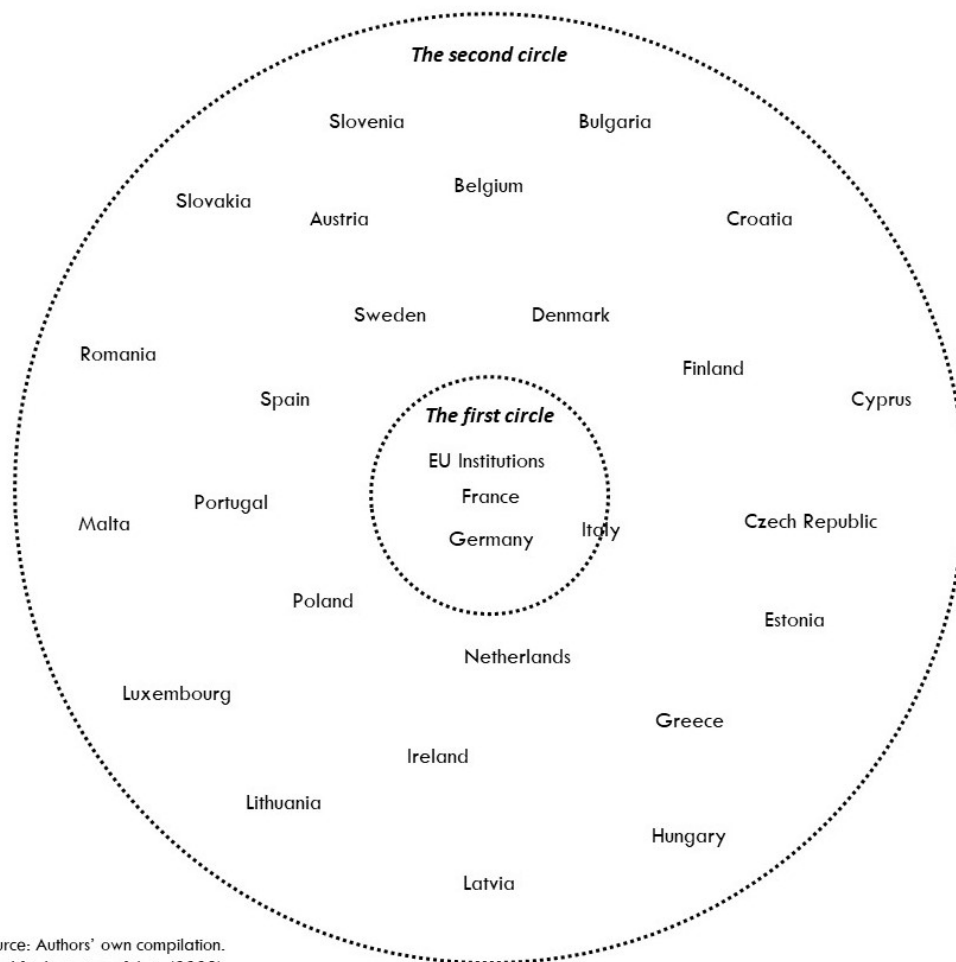
⁷ Jain 2009.



Nonetheless, until now there has been no literature that provides deeper insights into how the second circle of active smaller and medium-sized EU member states – with their different preferences – engage with India as a group or how India responds. There is also a lack of connections made to

the general and more theoretically oriented literature on international politics or foreign policy. This paper provides some initial empirics that should be helpful for policymakers and provide a starting point for theoretical scholarship.

Figure 1. Overview: Circles of EU-India relations



Source: Authors' own compilation.
Modified version of Jain (2009).



Methodology

This study focuses on India and a select group of EU member states from the second circle: Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden, representing the Iberian, South, Benelux, Nordic, Baltic and Visegrad European subregions. The procedure for case selection was to select states from significant subregions that are not contending to be in the first circle (Italy) but still conduct ongoing engagement with India over time. The Iberian subregion is represented by two states, due to Portugal's EU Presidency in 2021. Portugal has listed expanded cooperation with India as a priority for its term.⁸

In addition to secondary literature, the study builds on various primary sources. First, two separate but similar surveys were directed to respondents in the selected EU member states and India, respectively.⁹ While the respondents are generally assessed as having a good overview of their country's relations with India, not all have detailed knowledge. The respondents are scholars, analysts and active or retired officials dealing with relations between the EU and India or the EU and Asia, and between India or Asia and the individual EU

member states. Some respondents, however, might be more familiar with broader Europe-Asia themes. We also consulted official documents issued by India's Ministry of External Affairs,¹⁰ as well as joint and unilateral statements following official visits. Joint statements are negotiated outcomes and thus indicate the respective countries' priorities, but also how the two actors want to portray their relationship with other actors. Unilateral statements following visits and meetings are not the result of negotiations but can be assumed in such cases to reflect both sides' views of the discussions. Data was collected between June and November 2020. To enhance our findings and the literature on EU-India relations, future research could include a wider set of interviews with different experts and policymakers.

Second circle European states' engagements with India and India's response

As mentioned above, the literature on Europe-India relations tends to focus on the first circle of the "Big Three" – France, Germany and the EU's institutions. At the same time, smaller and medium-sized European states of the second circle are

identified trends. Every respondent was informed that their participation was voluntary and given the chance to indicate their preference for being anonymous or named in the report.

¹⁰ For country-specific information, we consulted country briefs. Dated between 2018 and 2020, the length of these briefs varies between three and eight pages. The annual reports summarise India's global engagement with Indian activities by the selected member states and reflect India's priorities in the relationships. The length of the annual reports varies from 282 pages in 2014–2015 to 481 pages in 2019–2020. While we did not scrutinise the full reports, we consulted the chapters for the selected EU member states in order to gain further insights into India's official views on the relationships with the member states.

⁸ European Parliament 2021. Priority dossiers under the Portuguese EU Council Presidency, briefing. European Parliamentary Research Service. Retrieved from [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BR IE/2021/659434/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)659434_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BR IE/2021/659434/EPRS_BRI(2021)659434_EN.pdf) (accessed January 8, 2021).

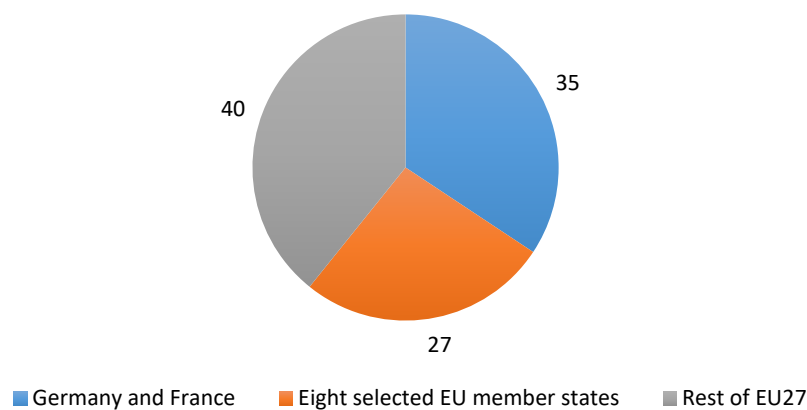
⁹ These digital surveys combined closed and open multiple-choice questions. Ten respondents providing the European perspective received a survey with nine closed multiple-choice questions and six open-ended questions. Seven respondents providing the Indian view completed a separate survey with a slightly adjusted design. This survey contained seven multiple-choice questions with weighted alternatives as well as one open question that allowed additional elaboration. Since the survey population was small (17 respondents), the results were not used to draw statistical inferences. Instead, we qualitatively compared the results and



actively engaging with India and India is responding. However, as we have pointed out, we know very little about these engagements, how they are structured, and the internal commonalities and differences in European strategies.

On a general level there is a significant amount of activity between second circle EU member states and India, but there are also possibilities for scaling-up, as is illustrated below. As a group, the countries selected for this study accounted for 26% of total EU27-India trade in 2018 (see figure 2).¹¹

**Figure 2. EU-India trade relations
(total trade, in billion USD)**



At the same time, the political attention paid to this group by India is almost as substantial as that paid to the first circle. Figure 3 shows the visits conducted by high-

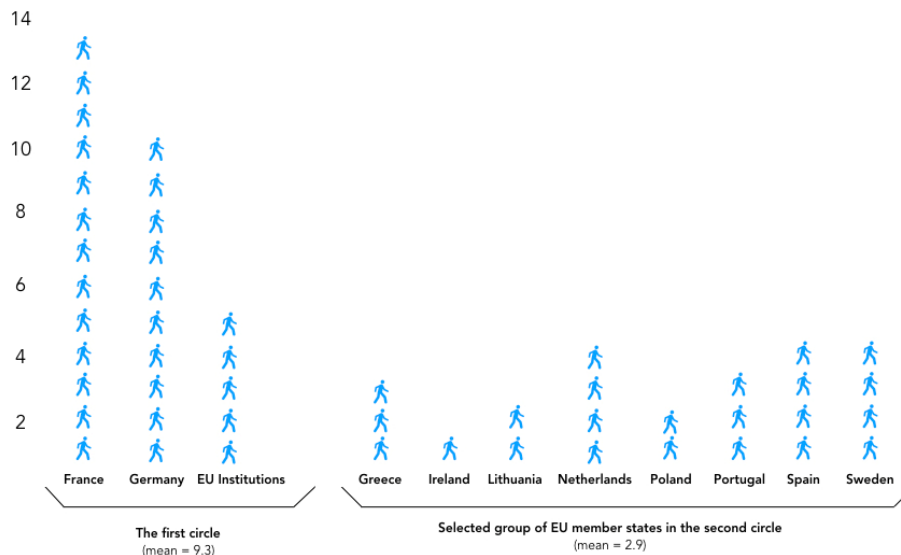
level representatives, such as the head of state or deputy head of state, the prime minister and foreign ministers, and indicates the level of political attention since 2014.¹²

¹¹ World Bank 2020. Data retrieved from <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountrySnapshot/en/IND> (accessed 16 October 2020). While Eurostat provides data for EU27 trade with India, the authors were not able to access data for export and import of goods as well as services vis-à-vis India for the respective countries. Therefore, the data from the World Bank was used.

¹² Ministry of External Affairs. 2014. Annual Report 2013-2014. Retrieved from http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/23873_EXTERNAL_AFFAIR_Eng_AR_2013-14.pdf (Accessed December 1, 2020); 2015a. Annual Report 2014-2015. Retrieved from http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/25009_External_Affairs_2014-2015_English_.pdf (Accessed December 1, 2020); 2016. Annual Report 2015-2016. Retrieved from [\[16_Final_compressed.pdf\]\(#\) \(Accessed December 1, 2020\); 2018a. Annual Report 2016-2017. Retrieved from \[http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/29521_MEA_ANNUAL_REPORT_2016_17_new.pdf\]\(http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/29521_MEA_ANNUAL_REPORT_2016_17_new.pdf\) \(Accessed December 1, 2020\); 2018b. Annual Report 2017-2018. Retrieved from \[http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/29788_MEA-AR-2017-18-03-02-2018.pdf\]\(http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/29788_MEA-AR-2017-18-03-02-2018.pdf\) \(Accessed December 1, 2020\); 2019a. Annual Report 2018-2019. Retrieved from \[http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/31719_MEA_AR18_19.pdf\]\(http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/31719_MEA_AR18_19.pdf\) \(Accessed December 1, 2020\); 2020a. Annual Report 2019-2020. Retrieved from \[http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/32489_AR_Spread_2020_new.pdf\]\(http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/32489_AR_Spread_2020_new.pdf\) \(Accessed December 1, 2020\).](http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/26525_26525_External_Affairs_English_AR_2015-</p></div><div data-bbox=)



Figure 3. Number of high-level visits, 2014-2019



Source: MEA, Annual reports 2014-2020

However, as illustrated above, there are variations in how individual states manage to attract India's attention. Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden have a visiting frequency above the mean, while Ireland, Lithuania and Poland show a frequency below the mean in the past five-year period.

In contrast to the first circle actors in Europe, with which India has negotiated Strategic Partnerships that facilitate a regular exchange of perspectives at the

highest political levels, the bilateral talks between India and the selected countries are conducted in various formats. Foreign Office Consultations constitute the institutional mechanism for all the selected countries' regular bilateral diplomatic talks between the foreign ministries and India's Ministry of External Affairs.¹³ Another form of recurrent diplomatic dialogue is the Joint Economic Committee/Commission, which features in the Indo-Greek and Indo-Portuguese relationship.¹⁴ One difference between the Foreign Office Consultations

¹³ Ministry of External Affairs. 2020b. Country Brief: India-Poland Relations. Retrieved from https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India_Poland_Feb_2020.pdf (Accessed December 1, 2020); Ministry of External Affairs. 2019b. Country Brief: India-Spain Bilateral Relations. Retrieved from https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/spain_brief_sep_2019.pdf (Accessed December 1, 2020); Ministry of External Affairs. 2018c. Country Brief: India-Netherlands Bilateral Brief 2018. Retrieved from https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India-NL_Bilateral_Brief_January_2019.pdf (Accessed December 1, 2020); Ministry of External Affairs 2020c. India-Lithuania Bilateral Brief 2020. Retrieved from https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Ind_Lithu

[ania_2020.pdf](https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India_Poland_Feb_2020.pdf) (Accessed December 1, 2020); Ministry of External Affairs 2020d. Country Brief: India-Ireland Relations 2020. Retrieved from <https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Ireland2020.pdf> (Accessed December 1, 2020).

¹⁴ Ministry of External Affairs. 2019c. Country Brief: India-Greece Bilateral Relations. Retrieved from https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Biref_greece_2019.pdf (Accessed December 1, 2020); Ministry of External Affairs. 2019d Embassy of India Lisbon: Portugal - Bilateral Brief. Retrieved from https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Brief_portugal_2019.pdf (Accessed December 1, 2020).



and the Joint Economic Commission format is that the latter focuses on bilateral economic exchange by convening representatives from the Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as officials from other ministries and their European counterparts. A similar but expanded version in the Indo-Swedish relationship is the Joint Commission for Economic, Industrial and Scientific Cooperation.¹⁵ Next to these recurring formats, engagements are governed by Memorandums of Understanding and operationalised in Joint Working Groups.

In addition to these diplomatic prerequisites for cooperation on issues of mutual interest, Joint Statements adopted at high-level summits facilitate conversation on political issues. Ultimately, visits at the highest political level demonstrate political support for cooperation on global issues between India and European countries. Similarly, partnership agreements add avenues for engagement and create new possibilities for cooperation, as is the case with the Indo-Swedish partnership agreement on joint innovation, which is linked to a high-level dialogue on innovation. EU member states also have an opportunity to contribute to the Strategic Partnership between the EU and India through their membership. Diplomats from the member states interact on common positions within Council groups and committees. In addition, the EU Delegation in New Delhi convenes regular

meetings of diplomats in India, and the EU often holds meetings and dialogues with India together with member state representatives.

Small and medium-sized second circle European countries also have opportunities to publish strategies in order to gain attention and provide an impetus to their engagements with India. Unlike the 2018 EU-wide India-specific strategy, these strategies provide a broader conception of a country's engagement with Asia and India's position in it, as in the case of Ireland's 2020 Asia-Pacific Strategy Paper,¹⁶ and the Netherlands 2020 Indo-Pacific guidelines.¹⁷ One respondent told how their country developed a strategy "to coordinate government efforts to increase [the country's] presence and visibility in the region, with India as one of the top priorities".¹⁸ A similar sentiment was shared by another respondent who argued that such strategies could "serve as a new framework for engaging with Asia for the [country's foreign ministry] and the government at large".¹⁹ At the same time, states have endorsed the 2018 EU Strategy on India, acknowledging that strategy-making is a matter not just for a specific country's diplomatic outreach, but also for its EU-wide engagement.

¹⁵ Ministry of External Affairs. 2020e. Embassy of India Stockholm: India-Sweden Relations. Retrieved from https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Sweden_Bilateral_Brief_for_Website-23_Sep_2019.pdf (Accessed December 1, 2020).

¹⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs. 2020. Launch of the Asia Pacific Strategy: "Global Ireland: Delivering in the Asia Pacific region to 2025". Retrieved from <https://www.dfa.ie/news-and-media/speeches/speeches-archive/2020/january/launch-of-the-asia-pacific-strategy-global-ireland-delivering-in-the-asia-pacific-region-to-2025.php> (Accessed December 1, 2020).

¹⁷ Government of the Netherlands. 2020. Indo-Pacific: een leidraad voor versterking van de Nederlandse en EU-samenwerking met partners in Azië. Retrieved from <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/publicaties/2020/11/13/indo-pacific-een-leidraad-voor-versterking-van-de-nederlandse-en-eu-samenwerking-met-partners-in-azie> (Accessed December 1, 2020).

¹⁸ Survey response 10, September 27, 2020.

¹⁹ Survey response 17, October 30, 2020.



Detailing the second circle engagement with India on global issues

Cooperation on global challenges has become a buzz-phrase in contemporary EU-India relations. However, the kind of global issues that should be labelled “global challenges of mutual concern” in engagements with India remains unclear. Given the channels of and mechanisms for engagement provided by the established formats and the growing attention to global issues in Europe-India relations, it is also uncertain whether any particular issues attract more engagement than others.

This section elaborates on the forms, preferences and methods of engagement between the second circle member states

and India on a range of global issues. It also identifies differences in the scope of cooperation on global issues between European countries and India, and the mismatched perceptions of European and Indian respondents.

Figure 3 visualises the global issues highlighted for this study based on all the survey entries from European and Indian respondents. The more substantial and prominent engagement on an issue was in the responses, the larger the word in the word cloud. While an attempt was made to cover the full range of global issues, there are undoubtedly other issues that are also of relevance to Europe-India relations.

Figure 4. Global issues in EU-India relations



Source: Authors' own compilation.

The global issues on which the second circle European states and India engage encompass conventional and non-conventional foreign policy issues, and range from security and development policy to cybersecurity and renewable energy. Almost all the respondents indicated engagement on United Nations institutional issues, sustainable development, non-

proliferation and export controls, and counterterrorism. Similarly, cybersecurity, climate action, renewable energy, and regional political and security crises constituted critical global issues for engagement. This finding is corroborated by a survey of the statements made following official visits, in which issues such as UN reform, cybersecurity,



counterterrorism, non-proliferation and export controls regularly feature.²⁰

Besides these dominant issues, Europe-India relations involve exchanges and bilateral discussions on peacekeeping and peacebuilding, international law and human rights. Our study also confirms engagement to a lesser degree on pressing contemporary issues such as 5G, internet governance, Artificial Intelligence (AI), migration and disaster risk management.

A clear finding is that the group of countries selected for the study engage with India on a greater number of global issues through the EU than in their own bilateral relationships. Only three of the eight countries engage with India on more than five global issues bilaterally (the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden). All the other countries engage bilaterally on four or fewer global issues. The mean for bilateral engagement was 4.1 per country of the 16

different global issues mentioned in Figure 4. At the same time, the mean number of global issues engaged with through the EU is 6.8 per country. While the survey depicts perceived engagement on global issues, it is important to note that European respondents identify a higher number of global issues being discussed through the EU than in bilateral relationships. Even though it is to be expected that the EU-level should constitute an avenue for foreign policy for these member states, it is striking that more global issues are discussed in the EU-wide partnership than in bilateral relationships.

One trend in the data is for European second circle states to align themselves with what they perceive to be India's preferred issues of engagement and act on these issues. Almost every European country studied pursues engagement on UN institutional issues, indicating their response to India's quest for a permanent

²⁰ Government of Sweden. 2018. Sweden-India Joint Action Plan, agreed by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Retrieved from <https://www.government.se/statements/2018/04/sweden-india-joint-action-plan-agreed-by-prime-minister-stefan-lofven-and-prime-minister-narendra-modi/> (Accessed December 1, 2020); Kingdom of the Netherlands. 2018. India-Netherlands Joint Statement during visit of Prime Minister of Netherlands to India (May 24, 2018). Retrieved from <https://www.netherlandsandyou.nl/latest-news/news/2018/05/23/india-netherlands-joint-statement> (Accessed December 1, 2020); Ministry of External Affairs. 2017. India-Spain Joint Statement during the visit of Prime Minister to Spain (May 31, 2017). Retrieved from <https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28500/IndiaSpain+Joint+Statement+during+the+visit+of+Prime+Minister+to+Spain+May+31+2017>; Ministry of External Affairs. 2019e. Press Statement during Visit of Vice President to Lithuania (August 17, 2019). [Video] Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXOiBw8ytl8&list=UU-wttYGdvP8Roy8mh8VbzKw&index=170> (Accessed December 1, 2020); Ministry of External Affairs. 2019f. Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of India and Poland. Retrieved from <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/31777/Joint+Statement+of+th>

<https://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?25837/Statement+by+Prime+Minister+at+the+Joint+Press+Briefing+with+Prime+Minister+of+Ireland>; Ministry of External Affairs. 2018d. Press Release on the State Visit of the President of India to the Hellenic Republic (June 16–19, 2018). Retrieved from <https://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?29984/Press+Release+on+the+State+Visit+of+the+President+of+India+to+the+Hellenic+Republic+June+16+19+2018>; Ministry of External Affairs. 2016b. India- Sweden Joint Statement during the visit of Prime Minister of Sweden to India: New Momentum, Higher Ambitions (February 13, 2016). Retrieved from <https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/26357/India+Sweden+Joint+Statement+during+the+visit+of+Prime+Minister+of+Sweden+to+India+New+Momentum+Higher+Ambition++February+13+2016>; Ministry of External Affairs. 2017. India-Spain Joint Statement during the visit of Prime Minister to Spain (May 31, 2017). Retrieved from <https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28500/IndiaSpain+Joint+Statement+during+the+visit+of+Prime+Minister+to+Spain+May+31+2017>



seat on the UN Security Council, and probably also UN candidacies. Nonetheless, one respondent observed that “the UN is a regular talking point in any meetings and discussions, but without any specific initiatives taken”.²¹ Other recurring global issues raised were non-proliferation and arms export controls, counterterrorism and cybersecurity, all of which are typically part of India’s diplomatic agenda. Regional political/security crises were mentioned by some European respondents but were generally not prominent in the statements we analysed, suggesting a lower level of interest on the part of India in engaging on these issues with second circle countries. Despite the fact that climate change constitutes an urgent global challenge, engagement on climate action was highlighted by far from all the respondents.

Migration, 5G, and peacekeeping and peacebuilding constitute global issues where there has been scant engagement. In fact, little engagement exists on what constitute core issues for many European countries. For instance, human rights are primarily addressed in the EU-wide strategic partnership with India, rather than in bilateral talks. This is also corroborated by official statements following visits. European countries often raise issues that are perceived as problematic through the EU. As one respondent noted, “[my country] sometimes prefers to engage through the EU, also on political/ strategic issues (the Middle East, Ukraine, etc.), to be able to hide a bit behind a larger group of countries, or larger countries with more political clout, when bringing up sensitive points”.²²

At the same time, Indian respondents describe a broader scope of engagement on global issues.

According to Indian respondents, all the global issues examined constitute a topic of conversation with European counterparts. This approach correlates well with contemporary Indian strategic ambitions to be a leading global power and India’s active diplomacy on global debates. According to a recent monograph by India’s Minister of External Affairs, “*the India Way [in international relations], especially now, would be more of a shaper or decider rather than just be an abstainer*” on global issues.²³ Another interpretation of the results could be that India prefers engagement on a range of issues in order to meet the expectations of other actors in the international system, especially since India lacks a published grand strategy or the institutional capacity to be a driving force in that international system.

The findings also suggest mismatched perceptions. Whereas every Indian respondent confirmed talks on 5G, AI and internet governance, very few Europeans identified these as global issues where engagement was being pursued. In addition, while Indian respondents confirmed engagement on the geopolitics of technology, European respondents were less clear about diplomatic talks pertaining to technology. At the same time, both sides considered cybersecurity to be a matter of both EU-wide and bilateral engagement with India. The question therefore arises whether the difference indicates that there is greater potential for engagement on technology than many Europeans acknowledge. If so, there is a risk that European states and India are operating out of step with each other.

²¹ Survey response 2, July 14, 2020.

²² Survey response 17, October 30, 2020.

²³ Jaishankar, Subrahmanyam. 2020. *The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World*. Noida: HarperCollins Publishers: p. 211



Drivers of and obstacles to engagement between India and second circle member states on global issues

We asked the survey respondents to indicate what they perceived to be the factors that were either driving or impeding engagement. This question was in relation to engagement in general on global issues, rather than specific issues. In a nutshell, the *drivers* of cooperation on global issues were identified as economic interests and an appreciation of India's global importance, while a lack of institutional capacity or political priority were identified by both European and Indian respondents as *impeding* engagement. Factors in domestic politics were not perceived by either side as influencing engagement.

Factors driving engagement

Although there were some differences in the perceptions of European and Indian respondents, it is possible to categorise the drivers of cooperation on global issues between the selected European countries and India in three groups. A first set of drivers is those that were perceived to be highly important for both Europeans and Indians. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a main driver was "business opportunities". This trend is also reflected in joint and unilateral statements, and the reports by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, which also refer to bilateral business promotion and related engagement as important factors.

Another main driver identified by both sides was "India's global weight and influence". How India performs as an emerging global power is a matter of debate.²⁴ Nonetheless, it is clear that the prospects of India becoming a global power increase its importance. At the same time, European respondents are aware that the influence of

their respective countries on India's preferences and priorities is currently limited. None of the European respondents identified the "global weight and influence" of their own country as attractive for India. This imbalance could affect how engagement plays out, and the circumstances in which smaller and medium-sized second circle European actors might be the more active partner in collaboration. As one respondent suggested: "*It is fundamental to consider in this context the asymmetrical nature of the effort: India is highly attractive to [my country] but also to the vast majority of European countries, which essentially for economic reasons are very interested in improving relations*".²⁵

Respondents perceived a second set of drivers as also playing a role, albeit not an unequivocal one. These are factors related to what the survey calls "common values". About half the respondents highlighted common values as important for both sides. Interestingly, Indian respondents highlighted this driver more than European respondents. This partial emphasis deviates from the pattern observed in statements following high-level meetings, where common values in one form or another are mentioned in almost all the statements. Quotes from the joint statements following high-level meetings of the Netherlands and India, Spain and India, and Sweden and India serve as typical examples: "*As thriving democracies, India and the Netherlands share a desire to work closely together and with all relevant players to support a rules-based international order that upholds agreed international norms...*" (the Netherlands); "[...] *both leaders acknowledged that India and Spain share a strong commitment to the principles and values of democracy, freedom, the rule of*

²⁴ Pande, Aparna. 2021, *Making India Great. The Promise of a Reluctant Global Power*. HarperCollins: 3–24.

²⁵ Survey response 10, September 27, 2020.



law, respect for human rights and the territorial integrity of States [...]" (Spain); and "Based on long democratic traditions in both countries, the two Prime Ministers expressed a continued commitment to democracy, the rule of law, the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms" (Sweden).²⁶

"Knowledge transfer", however, appears primarily to be a factor for India, although it is mentioned by some on the European side. This is not surprising as India has often explicitly called for knowledge and technology transfers from Europe, for example with regard to green technology. European policymakers might wish to consider how this asymmetry should inform their engagement with India.

The rise of China would appear to be a key factor that influences the level of cooperation between India and European countries. China was mentioned several times by respondents on both sides, and China's global activities and role are of growing importance for both sides when engaging with partners. As one respondent put it: *"Until rather recently, China was seen as an opportunity, both in an economic sense and its position on the world stage. This has changed drastically in the past few years, [...]. In this context, [my country] has been seeking new partners to work with on its Asia policy, and India seems to be finally gaining traction in a more consistent way as part of the thinking on Indo-Pacific and cooperation with like-minded partners in Asia".²⁷*

A third set of factors do not play a major role in promoting cooperation. The two factors mentioned in our survey as of lesser importance were "domestic political reasons" and "similar/overlapping positions". These low scores require some explanation. The low salience of domestic

political reasons suggests that a small number of influential political actors in both the selected countries and India are actively promoting closer cooperation. Together with the finding discussed further below that "lack of political priority" is a major obstacle to engagement, it is possible to identify a general lack of energy on both sides for Europe-India cooperation in the political sphere.

Factors impeding engagement

Respondents on both sides highlight "lack of political priority" as the chief obstacle to closer engagement. This lack pertains to engagement as a whole rather than on specific issues. Interestingly, Indian respondents more frequently attribute the lack of priority to European countries than to India.

Another major obstacle would appear to be constraints on institutional capacity, which according to the respondents are experienced on both sides. This indicates that the relevant actors and agencies in both India and our selected countries have only limited capacity to pursue strategic dialogues and implement joint initiatives. This lack of capacity might be more pronounced on the Indian side, as European respondents more commonly highlighted it as an obstacle and attributed it primarily to the Indian side. This fits the common perception of India's bureaucracy and especially its diplomatic service as being under strain.²⁸

The data suggests a lack of coherence between second circle European states and India on many global issues. "Similar and/or overlapping positions" was not generally perceived as a major driver, although it had slightly higher scores among Indian respondents than European. The lack of

²⁶ Ministry of External Affairs. 2016b; 2017; Kingdom of the Netherlands. 2018;

²⁷ Survey response 17, October 30, 2020.

²⁸ Bajpai, Kanti and Byron Chong. 2019. India's Foreign Policy Capacity, *Policy Design and Practice*, vol. 2, no. 2, 137-162.



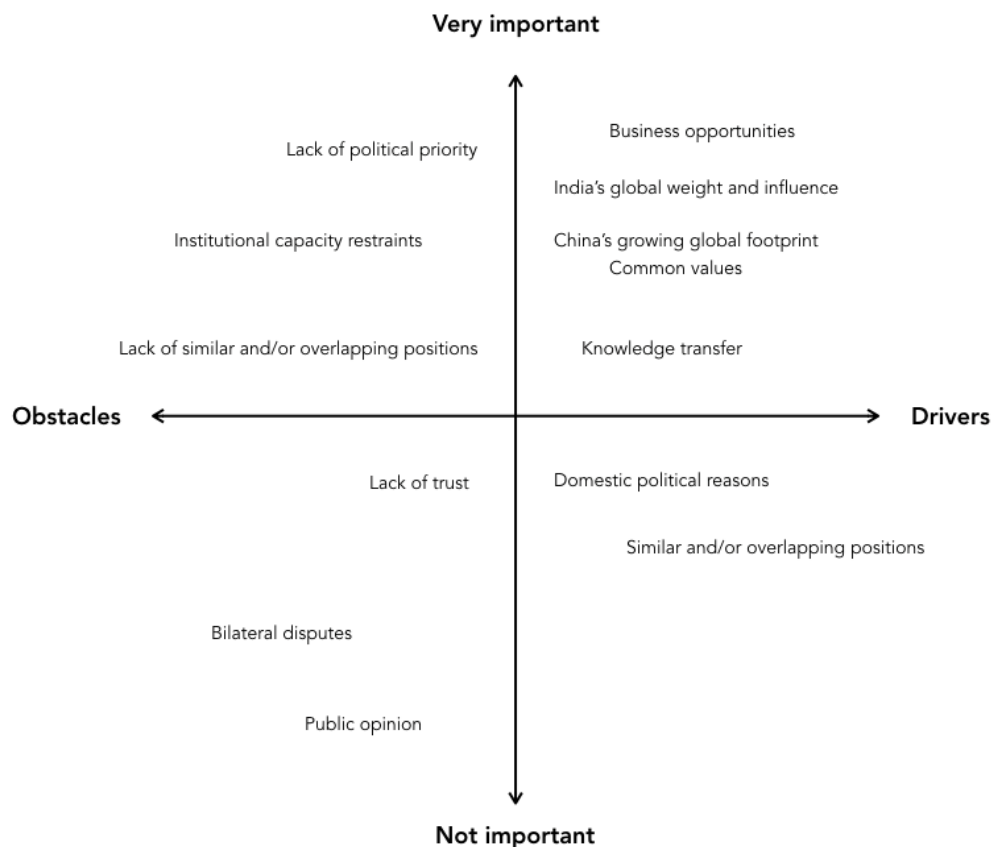
similar positions is seen by respondents as an obstacle. It is interesting to note that while there is a strategic will to be partners on global issues, India and European second circle states often seem to have divergent positions on concrete issues.

On the positive side, the environment for cooperation appears generally favourable in the sense that there are few bilateral or political problems that might affect further engagement. "Lack of trust", "bilateral disputes" and "public opinion" are not perceived as major obstacles by either side. This is notable given the growing concern voiced by human rights organisations,

researchers and media outlets concerning the condition of India's democracy. Judging from the perceptions in this limited selection, any apprehension regarding the current state of democracy in India does not appear to affect willingness to cooperate in a major way. Only one European respondent highlighted India's human rights record as a problem.

Figure 5 provides an overview of the drivers and obstacles. The x axis separates the obstacles and drivers. The y axis plots the drivers and obstacles according to their scores in the survey, ranging from unimportant to very important.

Figure 5. Drivers and obstacles



Source: Authors' own compilation



The relationship between EU- and member state-level engagement

Engagement between second circle EU member states and India takes place both bilaterally and at the EU level. Both sides acknowledge the benefits of cooperation at both levels. Nonetheless, Europeans and Indians seem to differ in their preferences for the level of engagement: Europeans tilt towards the EU level while Indians prefer the bilateral level.

Europeans from second circle states seem to prefer the EU level mainly because it has more impact collectively. In their comments, European respondents particularly mentioned regional issues and crises such as Syria or Afghanistan, as well as normative discussions on global policies as areas where the EU's collective influence and or/expertise is perceived as important. This perception is also supported by the joint and unilateral statements following high-level visits, where – with a few exceptions – regional issues/crises are rarely mentioned. According to one respondent: *"Human rights, climate change, disarmament it is important to keep EU unity on these issues, and dealing with India on them is more efficient on EU level"*.²⁹ Another respondent noted that: *"The EU has more expertise, capacities, roles and leverage to discuss these [global] issues with India"*.³⁰

European respondents prefer bilateral engagement mostly on issues where the EU lacks a fully integrated position or the EU institutions' access to the platform is limited, such as in UN or other multilateral contexts, or on issues to which the specific country gives extra priority. As one European respondent put it: *"[...] for India, as [a] very big country, it is important to*

understand the issues of small countries, like international law. Plus, there are issues like UN reform where the EU does not have a unified stance, so the bilateral track prevails".³¹

While the second circle of European states prefers to engage with India on global issues at the EU-level, India seems to prefer bilateral engagement. There are several reasons for India's preference. The fact that member states pursue their own bilateral partnerships with India and that the "Big three" European powers have long emphasised bilateral engagement may have steered India's preference for capital-to-capital engagement. In addition, while India has been developing bilateral cooperation with European states since its independence, its engagement with the EU on global issues has only gradually deepened in recent decades. There is much to suggest that India's foreign policy has been geared structurally to bilateral rather than multilateral cooperation, at least with regard to Europe. The various EU member states are dealt with by different divisions within the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and responsibility for the EU and its major member states – France and Germany – falls under different secretaries.³² Hence, a degree of path dependency is to be expected in India's approach. As one respondent put it: *"It is what major the EU member states desire, to engage with India bilaterally. This mixed signalling to India and the opacity in the functioning of the EC [European Commission] as well as a perceived bias towards China on trade issues and indifference to Indian concerns vis-à-vis China has led to this situation"*.³³ Another mentioned that *"EU competencies are limited in some areas like counterterrorism. Similarly, Indian*

²⁹ Survey response 5, August 31, 2020.

³⁰ Survey response 2, July 14, 2020.

³¹ Survey response 5, August 31, 2020.

³² Ministry of External Affairs 2021.

Organogram. Retrieved from

https://mea.gov.in/Images/amb1/MeA_organograms_NW_04.pdf (Accessed January 15, 2021).

³³ Survey response 14, October 2, 2020.

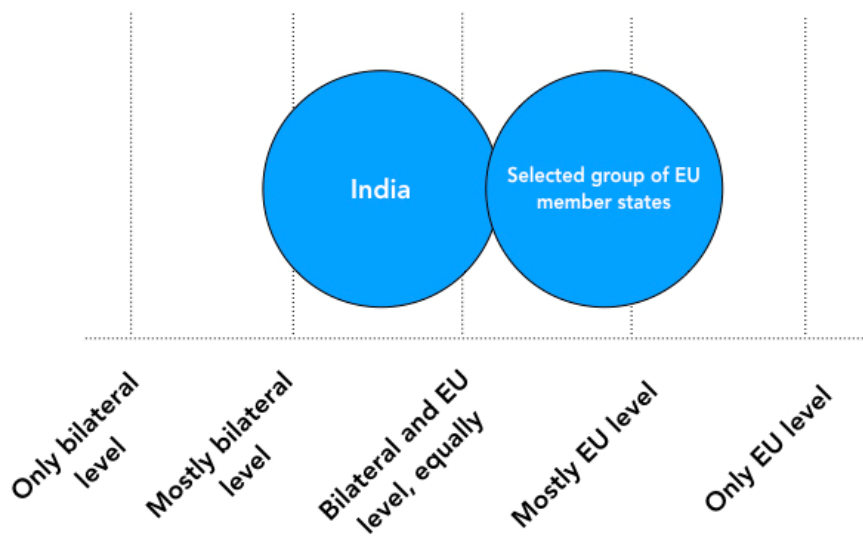


policy-makers sometimes lack clarity on the EU institutional framework”.³⁴ That said, Indians also see benefits in engaging with the EU level. For example, as one Indian respondent put it, “If issues are regulatory the EU seems the appropriate forum”.³⁵

Overall, however, both sides seem set to continue working on both levels on many issues, suggesting a twin track (or duplicate) approach to cooperation. Climate action is one such issue. It is possible to discern a division of labour in the comments of some European respondents, whereby the EU addresses regional security issues and global policy discussions, such as climate

change and human rights, while the member states focus bilaterally on promoting the business interests involved, such as renewable energy. As one respondent put it: “I think on the climate change-sustainable front, [my country] has developed a double strategy through the EU in terms of trying to find common ground with India in global conversations and bilaterally trying to promote [the country’s] companies that are investing in India, for example in support of its renewable energy policies”.³⁶ The above discussion on preferences regarding level of engagement is captured in figure 6.

Figure 6. Different preferences of levels



Source: Authors’ own compilation

Conclusions

The growing uncertainty in world affairs, and the new conditions and challenges facing the international order are bringing Europe and India closer at the strategic level. Both the EU institutions and the

member states view India as an increasingly indispensable partner in tackling global issues. When discussing actual influence on global affairs, however, the European view is partly derived from perceptions of what India may become rather than what it currently is.

³⁴ Survey response 13, October 2, 2020.

³⁵ Survey response 16, October 15, 2020.

³⁶ Survey response 10, September 27, 2020.



The academic discussion of European engagement with India has been dominated by the activities of a first circle of actors – France, Germany and until recently the UK – and the EU’s institutions. We argue, however, that the EU-India strategic partnership must be looked at in a much broader way. Several smaller states in a second circle, according to our terminology, are pursuing active engagement with India as an emerging global power both bilaterally and through the EU institutions.

Bilateral engagements can amplify existing opportunities but these countries can also play an outsized role within and through the EU and other multilateral organisations. By actively using their EU membership, member states in the second circle can temporarily enter the core of EU-India relations by influencing the EU’s common policies and institutions. This double approach to EU-India relations by second circle states can be constitutive of the EU-India strategic partnership and decisive in shaping the EU’s CFSP. India, in turn, is affected by the economies of second circle states, and increasingly by the international order in which they are acting. It is equally important for India to acknowledge these states for similar reasons.

Although the smaller EU member states cannot be viewed as a coherent and coordinated group, there are notable patterns in how and why they engage with an emerging global power such as India – and in India’s responses. There are also notable divergences, as well as differing rates of success in attracting India’s interest. The study confirms an ongoing engagement on global issues between the EU’s second circle and India which, although wide-ranging and growing at the collective level, is conducted individually by European states

in pursuit of a fairly limited agenda. Looking in more detail at this engagement, two trends can be identified.

First, the member states studied align their engagement with India’s agenda to a high degree. This could be an illustration of how member states in the second circle see long-term potential in India and are investing in the relationship by seeking common ground. It is India that is the rising global power – not the individual small and medium-sized European states. India’s emerging market, growing economic power and active efforts to position itself as a leading global power in the international system lead the EU member states to identify opportunities in the relationship. Consequently, certain high-profile domestic issues, such as human rights, rarely feature in the bilateral engagement. Instead, the EU as a collective becomes the primary arena for such discussions.

Second, there is untapped potential in the smaller member states’ India policy. Contemporary issues relevant to the digital age such as international norms and standards on 5G, AI and cybersecurity constitute such untapped potential and the member states’ technological expertise serves as a door opener. There is also potential in further expanding multilateral cooperation. Although India’s limited institutional capacity constrains actual impact, India has a long history of engagement in multilateral institutions and its influence is growing.³⁷ Another area of cooperation that could be further explored is peacekeeping and peacebuilding, where both sides have capacity but current engagement appears limited.

Responding to climate change constitutes an area for engagement but it was

³⁷ See Arndt, Michael 2019. “India and Multilateralism” in *New Directions in India’s Foreign*

Policy: Theory and Praxis edited by Harsh V. Pant, pp. 149–171.



surprising that more respondents did not highlight interactions on climate action. At the same time, the EU cooperates in the India- and France-led International Solar Alliance, where efforts to extend the clean energy transition could be critical to scaling-up climate action globally. Thus, engagements on climate action could be considered both a challenge and an opportunity.

Just as analysts and observers should note the different tracks for engagement, global issues could also be relevant at both levels. For instance, global talks on climate change are typically an issue for the EU level, while concrete renewable energy-related business interests raise a strong bilateral interest. As the EU's financial capacity increases through the European Investment Bank, however, the EU as a bloc will become an even stronger partner on climate action.

On what drives or impedes cooperation between our select member states and India, two conclusions can be drawn. First, the member states and India generally view each other favourably as partners on global issues. Only a few stumbling blocks in addition to limited capacity stand out. At the same time, there is a general lack of political dynamism and when the two sides do engage on global issues, their positions are not always aligned.

This suggests that Indian and European stakeholders that wish for a deepened partnership must put in consistent efforts to raise their profile. Given the large asymmetry in how Europeans and Indians in the group surveyed perceive the global weight and influence of the respective sides, the major burden of pushing for a deeper

strategic "mutual understanding" will probably fall on the Europeans.

Second, business opportunities play a large – perhaps even an outsized – role as a driver. There is nothing either unexpected about or wrong with business opportunities forming an important part of relations, but it does raise a crucial question. Would a predominantly business promotion agenda allow a wide-ranging strategic partnership with India or might too narrow a focus crowd out other aspects of cooperation? It is useful to recall in this respect how historically stalled trade negotiations have had a negative impact on the development of political cooperation between India and Europe.³⁸ In addition, it has been suggested with regard to Europe-China relations that the emphasis on economic factors diverted Europe's attention from the geopolitical implications of China's rise. Striking the right balance between trade preferences and political engagement with a strategic partner such as India will be an essential task for policymakers in the years ahead.

Despite the repeated contention of policymakers that democracy constitutes a connecting driver between the EU and India, this report documents a broader set of drivers. To enhance our understanding of democracy as a connector of the EU's external relations, future research could examine the role of political values in the EU's approach to global issues by comparing EU-China and EU-India relations.

When it comes to the preferences for level of engagement among this second circle of EU member states, we note that the Europeans give slight preference to the EU-track while India prefers the bilateral track to a slightly greater degree. This is a

³⁸ In fact, scholarship on EU-India relations suggests that the incomplete free trade agreement negotiations have hampered the political cooperation on climate change between Europe and

India. See Torney, Diarmuid. 2019. India's relations with the European Union on environmental policy. In *Environmental Policy in India* edited by Natalia Ciecierska-Holmes et al., Routledge.



mismatch that should be addressed in order to improve cooperation. At the policy level, it could be useful for both sides to develop their approach in order to better harness the potential of Europe's second circle and the EU-India strategic partnership as a whole. Given the nature of EU policymaking, with its mixed competences, a duplicate approach will persist but more could be done on both sides to act in a more coordinated manner. This would achieve better results and use scarce administrative capacity more effectively. The EU institutions and EU member states could improve coordination between the EU and the member state level, and try to develop a more distinct division of labour. India, in turn, could develop an integrated approach to the EU and its member states.

While our study illustrates the commonalities in the engagement of eight EU member states with India, multiple member states have not been assessed. To expand the intellectual thought on Jain's circles of Europe-India relations and contribute to the growing literature on bilateral relationships manifest by Kugiel's and Campos Palarea and Sengupta's existing studies, future research could examine the relationships between the whole range of EU member states and India in a comparative manner.³⁹ How do EU member states diverge and converge in their engagements with India? To what extent do EU member states effectively coordinate their actions?

To better grasp India's strategic outlook on Europe, future scholarship could address the driving forces behind India's increased interest in and engagement with the EU. To what extent is India's strategic thought on Europe guided by the notion of a Europe of various regions? What consequences does India's potential subregional approach have

for EU member states' attempts to engage with India? How do the EU's relationships with other states, such as China and the United States, influence India's increased attention on Europe?

Policy recommendations

- **The EU institutions and its member states should improve coordination in order to engage with India on global issues in a more joined up way, as suggested in the EU's 2018 Strategy on India.** How can the engagement of the EU institutions and its member states complement each other and reduce the risk of internal competition within the EU? Internal thinking should be developed on how to combine EU-India dialogue at the strategic level with operational capabilities at the member state level. The advantage of enhanced coordination is that it will assist with striking the right balance in the EU-India strategic partnership.
- **The EU should step up its dialogue with India on the pressing global issues of the digital age.** EU member states should increase their dialogue with India on issues related to the geopolitical aspects of technologies such as 5G and AI, and cybersecurity. As these topics are addressed in both bilateral relationships and multilateral forums, member states must utilise different avenues in their engagements with India. Regulatory questions can be raised under the joint EU umbrella, while the member states can bring their concrete expertise to the

³⁹ Jain 2009; Kugiel 2013; Campos Palarea and Sengupta 2017.



operational level. At the same time, the member states must coordinate their messages to enable them successfully to speak with one voice.

- **India should consider developing a strategic and coordinated approach to its relationship with the European Union.** To integrate and pursue its policy goals vis-à-vis the EU institutions and the member states, one option might be to establish a “EU coordination section” within the Indian Ministry of External Affairs. The tasks of the section would be to oversee relations with the EU and a mandate to coordinate policies vis-à-vis the 27 member states. Without increased coordination, there is a risk that Europe will perceive India’s strategic EU policy as diffuse and ad hoc.
- **Together, the EU and India should develop sector-based strategic communities.** Through this new format of exchange for politicians and practitioners, European and Indian stakeholders would be connected to open discussions on issues of mutual strategic interest. Conversations, exchanges and joint

knowledge building projects within strategic communities would facilitate prudent policy responses. Coordination and the facilitation of dialogue in strategic communities will require long-term funding commitments.

- **To address the lack of political priority, EU member states and India should increase the level of parliamentary diplomacy.** With enhanced political awareness of the extent and direction of cooperation between EU member states and India, the political priority in both camps is likely to increase. Besides parliamentarians from the EU member states, members of the European Parliament’s Delegation for Relations with India would be key stakeholders in parliamentary diplomacy. In the Indian Parliament, European parliamentarians could interact with different standing committees, notably the Standing Committee on External Affairs. To ensure forward-looking and holistic conversations, parliamentary interactions should be intergenerational, convening junior and senior members of parliament.

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⁴⁰ As a co-author, Lidén did not have access to other survey responses when completing the survey. To minimise the risk of bias in Lidén’s data entries, the analysis of all the survey responses was conducted after he had completed the survey.

Before joining UI, Lidén was Desk Officer for India at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and completed the survey based on this experience.



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