



## India and the World

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### Are perceptions of India shifting in the EU?

Will India's current approach to Russia in general, and Delhi's position on the war in Ukraine in particular, affect India's relations with Europe, going forward? The question was discussed in two separate conversations in which I participated together with European colleagues and officials last week. Clearly, the importance attached to India in Brussels and across European capitals is not being downgraded. Quite the opposite. Yet, the *framing* of partnerships with India is being considered by several member states. It is important to note that most EU member states list ["business opportunities"](#) as the main driver in their bilateral partnerships with India. Addressing global challenges together with India – including those associated with a major conflict – is preferably done through the EU's common foreign and security policy. Yet, different approaches can be identified in how member states currently think about India. Smaller member states like the Czech Republic, Ireland, and even the Netherlands, will not change course but will continue to work with India in areas where cooperation already exist. France on the other hand seems intent to double down on expanding cooperation with India - "no matter what". Germany considers reframing its approach. Berlin is more likely to begin to acknowledge differences with India in ["national interests and foreign policy objectives"](#), and will at the same time seek to broaden and deepen the relationship. In short, expect less focus from Berlin on shared values, and more focus on common interests. [Some analysts](#) have suggested that the EU should adopt an approach similar to that of Germany's, and not assume extensive like-mindedness with India. Nonetheless, the EU should still seek to deepen and broaden engagements by providing India with options for [diversifying from its dependencies on Russia](#). For example, furthering cooperation in the defence sector would serve as an important step, as was discussed this summer during the first [EU-India consultation on Security and Defence](#). Moreover, there is a slight shift in Brussels regarding who is driving cooperation with India. The leading role which was previously with diplomats within the European External Action Service (EEAS), is now with technocrats in the Commissions' Directorate Generals (DG's). The three major initiatives, which the EU is pursuing with India: negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement, Connectivity, and the newly established Trade and Technology Council are led by DG Trade, DG INTPA and DG Connect, respectively. There is no consensus among observers on how this will affect the EU's engagement with India going forward, but the situation may complicate a streamlined approach. Finally, it is worth noting how [PM Modi's comment about](#) today not being "an era of war" in his televised interaction with President Putin during the SCO meeting in Samarkand on September 16, was referred in European media outlets as a criticism of Russia. This was also alluded to by President Macron when he referenced Modi in his speech at UNGA's 77<sup>th</sup> Session. It should be recalled however that there is still a sentiment expressed [by prominent figures within India's strategic community](#) that Russia's security concerns should be heard and engaged with seriously.

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