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**TRANSACTIONALISM IN INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY,
CASE STUDY: INDIA-EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONS²**

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to analyze the dominant role of transactional drivers in India's foreign policy towards the European Union (EU). The article hypothesizes that India is trying to use its relationship with the EU in primarily transactional ways to achieve its own foreign and economic policy goals rather than to advance shared norms and values as democratic powers. Those goals include (i) leveraging its global image and reputation as a trusted and credible international partner, (ii) gaining greater regional and global influence, (iii) attracting foreign investment and boosting Indian exports. The article begins by explaining the concept of transactionalism in foreign policies. Secondly, it identifies the main drivers of India-EU relations with a special focus on (i) the concept of non-alignment and strategic autonomy in India's foreign policy, (ii) common norms and values shared by India and the EU, (iii) economic cooperation between India and the EU. Thirdly, it assesses the transactional dimensions of the drivers of Indian foreign policy toward the EU discussed in the preceding sections. Finally, it evaluates the significance of India's attempts to use its relations with the EU to achieve its own foreign and economic policy goals, including with respect to the implications for the EU's efforts to project itself as a normative power in relations with India.

Keywords: India, EU, foreign policy, FTA, transactionalism

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Introduction

The term “natural partners” is often used by politicians regarding strategic partnerships between states. Chris Patten (European External Relations Commissioner, 1999–2004), once said that “if there is a natural partner for Europe in South Asia, then surely it is India” (The Hindu, 2018). During the India–EU Summit in 2006, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared that “India and the EU are natural partners as we share common values of democracy, pluralism, and the rule of law” (Singh, 2006). During the India-EU Summit in 2020, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that “India and the EU are natural partners. Our partnership is also useful for peace and stability in the world” (ORF, 2020). During her address at the Raisina Dialogue 2022 in New Delhi, Ursula van den Leyen, Head of the European Commission, said that India and the EU are “natural partners who thrive in a world of common rules and fair competition” (von der Leyen, 2022). Despite such declarations made by high-level representatives from India and the EU, both parties have failed to capitalize on their natural partnership – relations between India and the EU remain close but are not a significant priority for either party.

The purpose of this article is to contribute to the scholarship on this “natural partnership” *manqué* by highlighting the role of transactionalism in India’s foreign policy towards the EU. The article hypothesizes that India is trying to use its relationship with the EU in primarily transactional ways to achieve its own foreign and economic policy goals rather than to advance shared norms and values as democratic powers. Those goals include (i) leveraging its global image and reputation as a trusted and credible international partner, (ii) gaining greater regional and global influence, (iii) attracting foreign investment and boosting Indian exports. Firstly, the article begins by explaining the concept of transactionalism in foreign policy. Secondly, it identifies the main drivers of India-EU relations with a special focus on (i) the concept of non-alignment and strategic autonomy in India’s foreign policy, (ii) common norms and values shared by India and the EU, (iii) economic cooperation between India and the EU. Thirdly, it assesses the transactional dimensions of the drivers of Indian foreign policy toward the EU discussed in the preceding sections. Finally, it evaluates the significance of India’s attempts to use its relations with the EU to achieve its own foreign and economic policy goals, including with respect to the implications for the EU’s efforts to project itself as a normative power in relations with India.

Transactionalism in state foreign policy

The election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States in 2016 catalyzed the growing academic interest in the role of transactionalism in foreign policy decision-making processes. American foreign policy during his term was described as tactical transactionalism by M. Zenko and R. Lissner (2020) or as transactional myopia by J. Nye (2020). There is no common definition of transactionalism as an element of state foreign policy among scholars. According to J. Nye, a state prefers bilateral relations over multilateral ones (Nye, 2020). G. Bashirov and I. Yilmaz (2020) believe this is due to several factors. First, bilateral relations are less complex than multilateral relations because they involve only two actors who may have different interests. Secondly, bilateral relations usually do not require long-term commitments for negotiated agreements, as is the case with multilateral agreements. Thirdly, commitments arising from bilateral relations are easier to implement, which means they can provide more immediate benefits to a state. Due to these reasons, transactionalism in foreign policy can cause states to distance themselves from multilateral alliances and international organizations (Ikenberry, 2017; Stokes, 2018). It is crucial to underline that transactionalism as an element of foreign policy implies that relations between states do not need to be based on shared values and historical ties. Those factors are considered secondary (Zenko & Lissner, 2017). The most important goal for decision makers is to benefit by establishing relationships with other actors in international relations.

Due to the lack of institutional infrastructure, ideology, and long-term strategy for cooperation, foreign policy may change dynamically based on the current state of interests and needs (Bashirov & Yilmaz, 2020). In this context, a state's foreign policy may be unstable and may be strategically inconsistent. Moreover, certain policies may contradict the government's goals in other areas (Payne, 2017). It is also worth emphasizing that the role of transactionalism as an element of foreign policy is very much linked to domestic politics. Some leaders seek to achieve a quick and spectacular political success that can be immediately presented to the voters. This allows them to enhance the legitimacy of their power or/and may contribute to winning the next election. This also means that the main goal is political gain, which may require making quick decisions that bring politically visible short-term benefits to the state (Zoellick, 2017).

Transactionalism is present as an element in foreign policy in many states, which define themselves as part of the Global North or the Global South. The author focuses on the states from the Global South. Some of those states are also members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The role and importance of these states in international relations are slowly but steadily increasing due to political, economic,

and demographic changes in the 21st century. The foreign policy of most of the states from the Global South is shaped by the pursuit of economic development. They want to sign favorable deals in a fluid international environment to improve their positions on the regional and global levels. For the first two decades of the twenty-first century, many of those states have simultaneously built relationships with the West, China, and Russia. Their foreign policies have become very pragmatic, resulting in a transactional approach to the world (The Economist, 2023a; The Economist, 2023b).

Analyzing a state's foreign policy through the prism of transactionalism has become more salient due to a changing global order. It allows for a better understanding of state decisions, especially those made in the Global South. Foreign policy is conducted in a way that involves states prioritizing political goals in a short-term perspective to obtain quick benefits over longer-term strategic benefits. States may pursue as many opportunities for economic development as possible, cooperating with the West, China, and Russia, both on a multilateral as well on a bilateral level, depending on where they can achieve the greatest political and economic benefits.

Main drivers of India-EU relations

From the Indian perspective, there are three main drivers of India-EU relations: (i) the concept of non-alignment and strategic autonomy in India's foreign policy, (ii) common norms and values shared by India and the EU, (iii) economic cooperation with special emphasis on the Free Trade Agreement.

The first driver relates to the concept of non-alignment and strategic autonomy, which have been the pillars of India's foreign policy since its independence. During the Cold War, India had deficient material capabilities but high aspirations. The path of non-alignment was chosen to provide flexibility of choices. With all its limitations, India has tried to set new terms of engagement, putting the national interest first but fostering international engagement based on cooperation (Tourangbam, 2023). Despite this, during the Cold War, India was marginalized in the international system and underrepresented in international organizations. At the same time, maintaining strategic autonomy was an important goal of India's foreign policy.

The growth of India's role and position in the economic and political spheres is related to the changes that have taken place in India since the early 1990s: the transformation of the economic development model and the main assumptions and directions of its foreign policy. Significant improvements in economic, political, and military determinants have caused India to be described as an emerging power at the beginning of the twenty first century (Prasad et al., 2023). Despite

this, New Delhi has remained attached to the idea of non-alignment. According to former Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh (2004–2014, who represented the Indian National Congress), “India is too big a country to lock itself into alliances, regional or sub-regional, political, economic or commercial”. Singh has repeated several times that the most crucial rule is “engaging with all major powers but aligning with none” (Muenchow-Pohl, 2012). After the elections in 2019 (won by Bharatiya Janata Party), Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanya Jaishankar said that India needs to pursue a multi-partner approach to ensure a multipolar Asia and a multipolar world. The statement captures a slight shift in Indian foreign policy toward multilateral engagements in recent years. According to Jaishankar, India’s foreign policy should be “more vigorous, more participatory compared to the earlier posture of abstention or non-engagement (Jaishankar, 2019). He also noted that the “Indian grand strategy in an uncertain world requires advancing [its] national interests by identifying and exploiting opportunities created by global contradictions so as to extract as much [sic] gains from as many ties as possible” (Jaishankar, 2020).

As outlined above, in recent years India has sought to increase its regional and global influence by engaging in various ties, alliances, or partnerships. However, New Delhi is very careful about assuming certain global responsibilities, which may impose limitations on the options available for pursuing its immediate national interests (Muenchow-Pohl, 2012). The attachment to non-alignment may be gone, but the focus on the importance of strategic autonomy is still there. It continues to impact India’s respect for national sovereignty and its preference for legally non-binding commitments agreed by consensus (in contrast to the EU generally favoring legally binding international commitments, as well as strong international systems). To build on this, India is using one of the rules of the five principles of peaceful coexistence: non-interference, which was the basis of the Non-Aligned Movement, as a way to justify its foreign policy choices.

The second driver of India-EU relations is related to norms and values shared by India and the EU. One of the goals of the EU’s foreign policy is to promote transparent forms of governance, viable market mechanisms, and a strong civil society. The EU Trade Commissioner (1999–2004), Pascal Lamy, underlined that “it is no longer only economic interests that are in question, but also values, the concept of society, of what is desirable and of what is risky [...] the EU brings with it values that have the aim of becoming universal” (Orby, 2008). Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the term normative power has become an important part of Brussels’ external agency (Kavalski, 2013). India, on the other hand, is not interested in being a full-time normative power. It may only project such an image from time to time as a tool to leverage its global image and reputation as

a trusted and credible international partner, as was done by New Delhi during the COVID-19 pandemic (Jaskólska, 2023a).

In 2003, three years after the first India-EU Summit, the European Security Strategy (ESS) stated that the EU's "history, geography and cultural ties give us links with every part of the world [...] These relationships are an important asset to build on. In particular, we should look to develop strategic partnerships with Japan, China, Canada, and India" (European Council, 2003). It is common to point out the similarities that unite India and the EU. Those include the motto of "unity in diversity", being like-minded democracies and emerging global powers, as well as nominally sharing the same values and notions of responsibility for global security (Grant, 2008).

The Strategic Partnership between India and the EU aimed at developing five priority areas of cooperation: (i) multilateral cooperation in the international sphere with an emphasis on conflict prevention, anti-terrorism, non-proliferation, the promotion of democracy, and the defense of human rights; (ii) strengthened economic cooperation involving sectorial dialogues and jointly drafted regulatory policies; (iii) cooperation in development so as to enable India to achieve the Millennium Goals as framed by the United Nations; (iv) intensifying intellectual and cultural exchange; (v) improving the institutional framework of Indo-European relations (European Commission, 2004). It was clear from the outset that this agreement would not be fully implemented. To start with, democracy and democratic values do not shape Indian foreign policy (Kavalski, 2007). New Delhi hesitates to encourage other countries to reform their political regimes towards more democracy. India itself is facing challenges in respecting human rights. Moreover, India has never signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty and, due to it, is not a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. The voting behavior of India at the UN General Assembly differs from the EU's. New Delhi only, if possible, prefers to abstain from voting once the clear stand may influence its interests in a negative way, as in the case of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

G. Khandekar has compared the strategic partnership between India and the EU to an arranged marriage, where there is no love. He acknowledged that India and the EU share common objectives, but these relate more to the general principles of the global order than to details and deliverables (Khandekar, 2011). In his other work with G. Grevi, they emphasize that India and the EU have been unable to develop joint strategic goals they can pursue together (Grevi, Khandekar, 2011). Similarly, T. Renard has characterized the EU's partnership with India as neither strategic nor comprehensive (Renard, 2011).

The reality of significant differences between the Indian and European visions of the international order was pointed out by the President of the European Parliament

(2004–2006), J. Borrell, in an article with the telling title, “Giving Substance to EU-India Relations” (Borrell, 2006). It became increasingly visible after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, when India refrained from outright condemnation of Russian actions during the UN General Assembly vote in March and October 2022. In June 2022, S. Jaishankar, India’s foreign of external affairs, pointed out that “Europe must grow out of thinking that Europe’s problems are the world’s problems, but the world’s problems are not Europe’s problems. He continued his argument saying: “If I were to take Europe collectively which has been singularly silent on many things which were happening, for example in Asia, you could ask why would anybody in Asia trust Europe on anything at all” (The Wire, 2022).

There are some norms and values that are shared by India and the EU, such as democratic values, human rights, and concern for global peace, security, and development. Yet those similarities did not make it possible to operationalize a natural partnership between India and the EU. This is because they are understood differently by India and the EU due to different historical and cultural conditions. So those can be seen more as the catalyst that accelerated the signing of the EU-India Strategic Partnership during the Summit in 2004 than a solid basis for cooperation.

The third driver of the India–EU relationship is economic cooperation. The establishment of official relations between India and the European Community (EC) took place in 1962 (Jaskólska, 2023b). During the Cold War, India’s relations with the EC focused mainly on economic issues. The political dimension did not play a significant role. The Commercial Cooperation Agreement (CCA) was only signed in 1973, and the Commercial and Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) in 1981 (Vivekanandan, 1997). Mutual relations were characterized by distrust, negative perceptions, and a lack of understanding of mutual needs and interests. In 1983, the European Commission established a delegation in New Delhi to improve political and economic relations between the parties (Buraga, 2022).

Cooperation became more intense after 1991, not only because of the changes in the geopolitical situation but also because of reforms in the Indian economy. The breakthrough moment in the development of economic cooperation was in 1994 when India and the EU signed the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development. The main aim of the Cooperation Agreement was “to enhance commercial and economic contacts between India and the EU [by] creating favourable conditions for a substantial development and diversification of trade and industry within the framework of a more dynamic relationship” (European Commission, 1994). This agreement was based on friendly ad hoc consultations rather than formalized mechanisms. The nature of this relationship had an impact on lowering the level of institutionalization of economic as well as political Cooperation (Lisbonne-de Vergeron, 2006). The Strategic Partnership, signed in 2004,

accelerated the start of negotiations on the Free Trade Agreement (FTA). During the India-EU Summit in 2007, it was announced that both parties would start negotiations with a view to closing them in 2010. However, joint talks broke down in 2013 as, according to the UE, India offered inadequate access to the automobile and spirits markets from the EU. Another problematic issue was New Delhi's refusal to open its financial services sector, such as banking, insurance, and e-commerce. The EU has wanted a strong and complete trade agreement that includes strong rules and removes barriers when it comes to the trade in goods, services, and investment (Buraga, 2022). During the India-EU summit in 2021, one of the most widely discussed decisions was to resume negotiation for a balanced, ambitious, comprehensive, and mutually beneficial trade agreement. The previous agreement was split into three parts: free trade, investment protection, and geographical indications (Jaskólska, 2023b). India and the EU have expressed willingness to sign the FTA in 2024, but it seems highly unlikely that this will be possible, due to long negotiations and challenging processes.

Despite the challenges in FTA negotiations, economic cooperation remains the most crucial part of India-EU cooperation. In 2021, India-EU bilateral trade was worth €88 billion in goods and €30.4 billion in services. This has made the EU India's third-largest trading partner, accounting for 10.8% of goods trade (right behind the US at 11.6% and China at 11.4%). India, on the other hand, is the EU's 10th most significant partner, accounting for only 2.1% of its goods turnover. The fact that today India is the fifth largest and fastest growing major economy in the world, and its trade with the EU is many times smaller than the EU-China exchange (580 billion euros in 2021) indicates there is a large untapped potential for greater economic cooperation (Kugiel, 2023). The EU was India's largest export destination. Almost 15 percent of Indian exports went to the EU in 2021. EU FDI in India reached €87 billion in 2020. The European Investment Bank has invested €3,8 billion in infrastructure, energy, and climate projects (EU-India Strategic Partnership, 2022).

Table 1. India and European Union Summits

| Date | Place | Key agreements/declarations/initiatives |
|----------------|---|--|
| June 2000 | Lisbon, Portugal | EU-India Partnership in the 21 st Century |
| November 2001 | New Delhi, India | Joint Initiative on the Enhancement of Investment and Trade |
| October 2002 | Copenhagen, Denmark | India-EU Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement |
| November 2003 | New Delhi, India | Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction |
| November 2004 | Hague, Netherlands | EU-India Strategic Partnership; Customs Cooperation Agreement |
| September 2005 | New Delhi, India | Joint Action Plan; Joint Initiative on Clean Development and Climate Change |
| October 2006 | Helsinki, Finland | Cooperation Agreement on Fusion Energy Research; Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Employment and Social Affairs |
| November 2007 | New Delhi, India | Beginning of the negotiations on FTA; Science & Technology Agreement |
| September 2008 | Marseille, France | Joint Work Program on Energy; Clean Development and Climate Change; Horizontal Civil Aviation Agreement |
| November 2009 | New Delhi, India | Agreement for cooperation between the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) and India |
| December 2010 | Brussels, Belgium | Joint Declaration on International Terrorism; Joint Declaration on Culture |
| February 2012 | New Delhi, India | Joint declaration for enhanced cooperation on energy; Joint declaration on research and innovation cooperation |
| March 2016 | Brussels, Belgium | Establishing Clean Energy and Climate Partnership; Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility |
| October 2017 | New Delhi, India | India-EU Agenda for Action 2020 |
| July 2020 | Virtual Summit | EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025; High Level Dialogue on Trade and Investment |
| May 2021 | Porto, Portugal (Summit in hybrid mode) First EU-India Leaders' Meeting | Joint Statement EU-India Leaders' Meeting; Connectivity Partnership; Re-opening of the negotiations on FTA |

| Date | Place | Key agreements/declarations/initiatives |
|------------|---|---|
| April 2022 | Ursula von den Leyen, Head of the European Commission visits New Delhi: meeting with PM Narendra Modi and keynote speech at Raisina Dialogue. | Promotion of EU's Global Gateway strategy and establishment of Trade and Technology Council |

Source: Authors own compilation based on EU and Indian reports.

Manifestations of transactionalism in India's foreign policy towards the EU

This section of the article provides examples of the manifestation of transactionalism in India's foreign policy towards the EU. These case studies illustrate how transactionalism affects the drivers of India-EU relations discussed in the previous section, namely: (i) the concept of non-alignment and strategic autonomy in India's foreign policy, (ii) common norms and values that are shared by India and the EU, (iii) economic cooperation with special emphasis on Free Trade Agreement.

The first case study considers how transactionalism affects India's application of non-alignment and strategic autonomy in its foreign policy towards the EU by examining India's response to the Joint Communication on the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy on 16 September 2021.

Before the EU announced its strategy on the Indo-Pacific, three member states had already published their own. The first was France, which launched its strategy in 2018 (Carteny & Tosti Di Stefano, 2023). The published document underlined that special partnerships have been forged with many countries in the region, including long-standing strategic partnerships with India and Japan – countries with which French bilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific has developed quickly (Grare, 2020). In September 2020, the German Government adopted its policy guidelines on the Indo-Pacific to strengthen Germany's role in the region in the long term. The German government aims to step up relations with the ASEAN states, Australia, and India, including through the conclusion of additional free trade agreements³. In 2020, the Dutch Indo-Pacific Guidelines were published, arguing that increased engagement with the Indo-Pacific, the world's primary growth region, was needed to promote European interests. For the Netherlands, important alternative trading

³ See more: German government adopts guidelines for the Indo-Pacific region. <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/service/archive/indo-pacific-1781916> [access: 12.05.2023].

partners from the Indo-Pacific are South Korea, New Zealand, India, and Australia⁴. India is one of the leading beneficiaries and advocates of the Indo-Pacific concept and was eagerly waiting for European countries to publish their strategies towards the region. In the case of all three strategies, India was mentioned repeatedly as an important partner from the region, with whom the development of political and economic relations is essential.

The Joint Communication on the EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy was published on 16 September 2021. High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, has highlighted his conviction that “the Indo-Pacific region is the future and must become a strategic priority for the EU” (Stahl, 2021). In the EU Strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, India is mentioned 18 times. Other important Indo-Pacific actors include Japan (mentioned 23 times), China (mentioned 18 times), and Australia (mentioned 12 times)⁵. According to the Strategy, the EU, Japan, and India are core Indo-Pacific partners. The EU will initiate regulatory cooperation in areas to support the green and digital transitions, as for example, the EU and India agreed to do in May 2021. India will be a focus for cooperation, including with respect to the quality of active pharmaceutical ingredients. The EU also declared the need to mobilize energy dialogues, partnerships, and financial instruments for sustainable, secure, and affordable energy for India. To achieve this, the EU committed to supporting a long unfinished project: the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) Pipeline. The EU will also seek to conduct joint exercises and port calls with Indo-Pacific partners. The EU Naval Force Somalia, Operation Atalanta, conducted successful joint naval activities with Indo-Pacific partners, including Japan, Pakistan, India, and Djibouti. The EU will also step up activities with partners under the project Enhancing Security Cooperation in and with Asia (ESIWA), which covers counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, maritime security, and crisis management. The pilot partners are India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Vietnam, with EU military experts already operating in Indonesia and Vietnam⁶.

India, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the EU all promote a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific founded on a rules-based order. For both, it is crucial

⁴ See more: Indo-Pacific: Guidelines for strengthening Dutch and EU cooperation with partners in Asia. <https://www.government.nl/documents/publications/2020/11/13/indo-pacific-guidelines> [access: 16.04.2023].

⁵ See more: Joint communication on the Indo-Pacific. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/press-corner/detail/en/qanda_21_4709 [access: 12.05.2023].

⁶ See more: Indo-Pacific: Council adopts conclusions on EU strategy for cooperation. Council of the EU Press release 19 April 2021. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/04/19/indo-pacific-council-adopts-conclusions-on-eu-strategy-for-cooperation/> [access: 21.05.2023].

to promote territorial integrity, sovereignty, the rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded lawful commerce, and peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international agreements in the Indo-Pacific⁷. New Delhi reacted to the strategies of France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the EU with visible enthusiasm. India's role and position in the Indo-Pacific were acknowledged, even though New Delhi remains warned of assuming global responsibilities that might impose limitations on the options available for pursuing its immediate national interests.

Interestingly, however, India did not publish any official strategies towards the Indo-Pacific (Zajączkowski, 2021). Prime Minister N. Modi, during a speech at the Shangri-La Forum in Singapore in June 2018, defined the Indo-Pacific as the area "from the shores of Africa to that of the Americas." N. Modi called for the establishment of an Indo-Pacific region based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations, the peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue, and adherence to international law (Ministry of External Affairs, 2018). This speech is seen as India's strategy towards the Indo-Pacific.

The ideas of non-alignment and strategic autonomy still influence policymakers in India. For New Delhi, it seems easier and more efficient to take advantage of other countries making commitments than to do it alone. It is more beneficial to have all possibilities open at any time. India-EU relations were in a hibernation phase from 2017 till 2020 and 2021 when an India-EU Summit was finally held. One of the reasons the EU decided to publish its strategy towards the Indo-Pacific. Even though India did not engage in political and economic cooperation to a degree satisfactory for the EU, it was recognized as an important player in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, the changing geopolitical situation in Asia, namely the rise of China, made India an even more important partner for the EU. India is still more democratic than China, more aligned with the West, and, most importantly, also sees China as a threat, especially due to the crisis on the border along the disputed Line of Actual Control which escalated in 2020 (Sankaran, 2023). Indo-Pacific strategy of the EU and its member states is using a tool by New Delhi to realize its regional and global aspirations.

The second case study relates to common norms and values shared by India and the EU. An example of how even this area of apparent normative congruence is transactionally inflected will be India's approach to the Strategic Partnership established in 2004 between India and the EU.

As R. K. Jain has noted, India and the EU have not defined a strategic partnership and how it should be perceived and defined (Jain, 2008). For New Delhi,

⁷ See more: Second India-EU Maritime Security Dialogue. <https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/34781/Second+IndiaEU+Maritime+Security+Dialogue> [access: 19.04.2023].

a strategic partnership is more about recognizing its potential and willingness to engage with others on various global issues. For the EU, a strategic partnership is a clear declaration that both parties are willing to build an economic and political relationship involving sharing global responsibilities and building coalitions of interests (Britsch, 2014).

The Strategic Partnership has been promoted as “the starting point of a collective reflection on upgrading EU-India relations” (European Commission, 2004). However, the 2004 Strategic Partnership is noncommittal. It is even mentioned in the document itself that it was signed with the intention “to produce non-binding guidelines for a further deepening of EU–India relations” (European Commission, 2004). According to G. Khandekar, the Strategic Partnership has yet to produce “a concrete list of mutually-beneficial priorities for day-to-day cooperation” (Khandekar, 2011). This means India and the EU decided to base their partnership on an ad hoc and non-binding approach. It seems that the EU was a way to respect India’s lack of interest in institutionalized and binding agreements. The hope was that Indian politicians would, even without it working on the implementation of the agreement. The problem is not always the lack of will, which is sometimes more mundane. New Delhi is engaged in multiple bilateral and multilateral relations but is facing a lack of diplomatic manpower. It is simply a matter of the objective choice of decision-makers on where the human resources should be used. The EU is not on a priority list, so the non-binding agreement made it clear to India that constant dialogue and communication from the EU side are unnecessary.

In this context, C. Wagner (2006) has made the important point that India tends to pursue a selective form of multilateralism to assert its national interest. It was relatively easy and did not involve too much cost to sign the Strategic Partnership, which is based on common norms and values, but it is much more challenging to operationalize it. D. Duran even called it empty rhetoric rather than a content-driven strategy (Duran, 2007). The EU and India hardly make it possible to take action on any of the five priority areas of cooperation presented in the Strategic Partnership. There are no clear goals and no timelines, which renders implementation of the Partnership effectively immeasurable. The EU is also not really willing to criticize India for undemocratic changes, which have been unfolding since 2014 when the BJP came to power with Narendra Modi as prime minister. In the Democracy Index compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit, India was ranked 27th in 2014 ranking, but dropped to 46th in 2022 ranking⁸. India and the EU also do not share the same vision regarding issues such as climate change and sustainable development. For example, Modi was very reluctant to commit to reaching

⁸ See more: EIU Democracy Index. <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2022/> [access: 25.05.2023].

net-zero emissions. Finally, at the UN Climate Change Conference or COP 26 in Glasgow in 2021, he announced that India by 2070 will reach net-zero emissions. It is the longest period among all states which decided to make a commitment. India is also not very eager to move away from coal, from which most of its energy is produced. As Coal and Mines Minister Pralhad Joshi said: “Thus, no transition away from coal is happening in the foreseeable future in India” (Al Jazeera, 2022).

Consequently, it was clear that for New Delhi, the Strategic Partnership does not need to be based on values that are really shared by both parties. It is more important to benefit from cooperation, and it does not matter how short-term it will be. The recognition of India as a strategic partner by the EU made India credible in the eyes of other actors in international relations. Importantly, member states of the EU became more eager to establish closer political and economic ties with New Delhi, as well as another actor in international relations. Despite being fully operationalized, Strategic Partnership was still used by New Delhi as a tool leveraging its global image and reputation as a trusted and credible international partner to gain greater regional and global influence and attract foreign investment.

The third case study examines the transactionalism evident in economic cooperation between India and the EU, as seen in India's approach towards the drawn-out negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement with the EU.

For India, the priorities for its relationship with the EU have remained unchanged since at least the beginning of the twenty-first century. Trade, technology, investment, infrastructure, and energy are at the top of the agenda. As for the EU, India is not only an important market for its goods and services but is also seen as a democratic country, which may help promote values and norms. Despite this, economic and trade cooperation is not free of challenges and unsolved problems. India is still a relatively closed economy due to the economic regime that the Indian government adopted during the Cold War. India used to be a mixed economy, a blend of socialism and capitalism. Economic transformation at the beginning of the 1990s was primarily focused on the liberalization of the Indian economy, which led to fast and dynamic economic growth (Mohan, 2018). Yet New Delhi still has much to do to enable India to participate fully in the global economy.

Negotiations on the Free Trade Agreement began in 2007 and were frozen in 2013. The lack of agreement on key issues prevented the continuation of the negotiations for eight years. At the same time, India and the EU differed on issues concerning the international trading system. India and the EU are often at loggerheads in the WTO. In 2021, India and the EU decided to restart the negotiation process (Srichandan, 2021). Although there are still sensitive points in the agreement, the geopolitical situation in the world is different. India hopes that the attractiveness of its market, the country's geopolitical importance, and EU-China tensions will

induce the EU to accept Indian proposals. According to P. Kugiel, India is interested in a rather unambitious agreement similar to those signed in 2022 with Australia and the UAE. The EU, on the other hand, is seeking an agreement based on respect for labor standards, sustainable development, and climate policy (Kugiel, 2023).

According to the analysis prepared by C. Navarra for the European Parliament, the Free Trade Agreement may eliminate up to 90% of tariffs, which will positively affect the value of trade between India and the EU (Navarra, 2020). It may encourage the EU to sign a slightly limited version of the agreement, depending on how many concessions India will make. India has consistently opposed the inclusion of labor rights, labor standards, and environmental clauses in the negotiations. India's elimination of tariffs on agricultural products from EU countries is a very sensitive topic, as is the case for the adaptation to global requirements of India's patent rights system and intellectual property protection procedures.

Ugo Astuto, the EU's Ambassador to India, noted that both India and the EU are expecting the deal to be struck before the Lok Sabha (lower house of the Indian parliament) elections in India and the EU parliamentary elections, to be held in 2024 (Buraga, 2022). The Trade and Technology Council, established in 2022 during Ursula von der Leyen's visit to India, in order to address challenges in trade between India and the EU, was supposed to play an important role in the negotiation process (Singh, 2022). However, as of June 2023, none of the 24 chapters had been closed (Kugiel, 2023).

Economic cooperation between India and the EU is substantial but still has much untapped potential. Due to the lack of a long-term strategy, coherent policy, and willingness to reach consensus (mainly on the Indian side), it is challenging to move forward. New Delhi is interested in developing economic cooperation with the EU, but it seems that preferences for short-term benefits and reluctance to introduce structural changes to the economy will be a constraint for this process.

India's policy towards the EU as an attempt to achieve its own foreign and economic policy goals – an evaluation

This article's main hypothesis is that India is trying to use its political and economic relations with the EU in order to achieve its own foreign and economic policy goals, such as: (i) leveraging its global image and reputation as a trusted and credible international partner, (ii) gaining greater regional and global influence, (iii) attracting foreign investment and boosting Indian export. This hypothesis has been validated by analyzing manifestations of transactionalism evident in three key domains of Indian-EU interaction: the concept of non-alignment and strategic

autonomy in India's foreign policy, as applied in the EU Strategy on the Indo-Pacific; common norms and values shared by India, as applied in the India-EU Strategic Partnership; economic cooperation, as applied in the negotiations for the India-EU Free Trade Agreement.

Leveraging its global image and reputation as a trusted and credible international partner has been a central goal of India's foreign policy since its independence. Since the very beginning, India's policy towards the EU was built on its need to be recognized by the EU as an important actor in international relations. Due to the lack of institutional infrastructure, ideological alignment, and a long-term strategy for cooperation, India's foreign policy towards the EU has undergone significant change based on the interests and needs of the current state. Indian politicians, in particular Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have sought to achieve quick and spectacular political successes that could be promoted positively to their supporters. For these reasons, among others, EU officials point out that India is the EU's most difficult strategic partner (Khandekar, 2011; Godement, 2015). It is also worth mentioning that on the micro level, EU officials have pointed out several challenges in how New Delhi's Ministry of External Affairs operates—with a lack of efficient communication, frequent delays, and a lack of responses (Muenchow-Pohl, 2012). The concept of strategic autonomy still strongly influences New Delhi's approach to negotiations and the decision-making process. It makes India unwilling to yield and adapt its positions where compromise may still be possible. One of the best known examples of this approach was the notorious “I reject everything!”, comment made by Indian Trade Minister Kamal Nath during the final session of the aborted WTO Doha Round 2008 (Mukherjee, Malone, 2011).

India had a similar approach to the negotiations on the Free Trade Agreement. Surprisingly, India and the EU announced that the deal is supposed to be signed in 2024, suggesting that the EU's approach to the extent of India's engagement in negotiations and its willingness to make concessions was once again too optimistic. On the other hand, India agreed to sign the Strategic Partnership in 2004, which was a very ambitious document touching on numerous sensitive issues. However, this agreement is based on an ad hoc and non-binding approach. For example, India agreed to promote democracy and repeatedly presented itself as the most populous democracy in the world, while at the same time, the quality of democracy in India is currently shrinking faster than ever. It clearly shows the lack of influence of the EU's normative power in India. India could leverage its global image and reputation as a trusted and credible international partner with no need to change its approach to domestic politics and foreign policy. The Free Trade Agreement, if signed, will require India to make several changes to its economic regime, which may pose a daunting challenge for New Delhi. Finally, India's approach to the EU

strategy to Indo-Pacific shows that India is trying to use its relationship with the EU to achieve its own foreign and economic policy goals while not being willing to go beyond declaration and publish its strategy towards the region, even though the Indo-Pacific is currently a key focus of India's foreign policy.

Gaining greater regional and global influence is presented by the Indian government as a natural process. It is based on the assumption that India deserves to play a more important role in international relations due to its history, as well as its economic, political, and demographic potential. Nonetheless, this is not as easy to attain as envisioned by the Indian government. New Delhi knows that to achieve this status, it must expand its level of international connections. As S. Jaishankar stated, India's national interests require identifying and exploiting opportunities created by global contradictions so India can gain as much from as many ties as possible. Developing cooperation with the EU is definitely one of those ties. Yes, there are several limitations in India-Europe relations. First, one of the most challenging limitations is that the perception of the EU among India's political and business elites is related *de facto* to the perception of the individual states of the Union rather than to the Union as a single political entity. Secondly, transactionalism has sidelined the role of the EU institutions. The Indian government chooses to talk directly with individual EU member states to resolve common issues and negotiate short-term, highly popular bilateral agreements, such as the Joint Strategic Vision of India-France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region or the India-France Joint Vision for Space Cooperation signed by India and France in 2018⁹. Thirdly, despite the declarations, India-EU relations are not based on norms and principles that reflect the EU's emphasis on the importance of values, norms, and guidelines. Fourthly, the EU is also seen as an actor unable to offer India much in terms of a military-strategic partnership. On the other hand, member states are able to do so, for example, Bilateral Defence Cooperation between the German Federal Ministry of Defence and the Indian Ministry of Defence, which was signed in 2006¹⁰. Tensions and conflicts also exist in the economic spheres on such issues as agricultural subsidies and the protection of intellectual property. When taken in combination, these political, economic, and normative differences make for a very challenging relationship between India and the EU.

Developing political and economic relations with the EU is only one option for India to gain greater regional and global influence. Due to strategic autonomy and partially supporting the concept of non-alignment, New Delhi is convinced that

⁹ See more: India-France Bilateral, Ministry of External Affairs of India. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/France2020.pdf> [access: 17.06.2023].

¹⁰ See more: Bilateral Defence Cooperation. <https://india.diplo.de/in-en/themen/defence-cooperation/2076064> [access: 17.06.2023].

its partners should guarantee India the possibility to cooperate with any country. While transactionalism notably influences India's foreign policy objectives, relationships between states do not necessarily require a general sense of like-mindedness, shared principles, or common values – although many of the partnership declarations invoke them. India can develop close cooperation with the EU, Russia, the United States, Iran, Saudi Arabia, or Israel. Conducting its foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific New Delhi can not only cooperate with Western countries but also prevent the strengthening of the China–Russia relationship. New Delhi may appeal to Moscow by highlighting the synergies between Russia's and its policies and interests with respect to the Indo-Pacific. India was expected, due to its democratic tradition, to join the West-led bloc condemning Russia's aggression and implementing sanctions. Instead, it has maintained its independent policy vis-à-vis Russia. This is another important difference in understanding the implications of a strategic partnership between India and the EU.

Attracting foreign investment and boosting Indian exports have become top priorities for India's economic policy since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh repeatedly stated that India's policy should be dominated by economic interests from when he took the office in 2004 (Jaffrelet, 2011). This approach is now called the Manmohan Doctrine. Prime Minister Narendra Modi developed the concept and put even more emphasis on this issue. He expressed it in the flagship programs of Make in India or Self-Reliant India. To achieve those goals, India needs to attract more foreign direct investment, so as to develop infrastructure and know-how and consequently boost Indian exports. The goal is to double Indian exports by 2030. India is expected to increase the manufacturing sector's share of GDP from the current 16% to 25% and become the new factory of the world (Kugiel, 2023).

New Delhi has recently signed Free Trade Agreements with Australia and the UAE. Currently, India is negotiating agreements with the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, Israel, Bangladesh and Peru. There is a high chance that some of those agreements may be concluded before the India-EU agreement is signed. It does not mean that, in the meantime, India will not benefit from economic cooperation with the EU. Even without the agreement, the EU is India's third-largest trading partner, and India is the EU's 10th largest partner. The question is whether New Delhi will be willing to reach a consensus with the EU on the most sensitive issues, such as subsidies in agriculture, intellectual property rights, etc.

If the Indian partnership with the EU is to transcend the transactional level, India must decide whether the concept of non-alignment and strategic autonomy allows it to make any significant concessions to meet EU concerns. Secondly, India and the EU need to decide if the so-called common norms and values they share

are sufficiently meaningful to allow a rethinking of the Strategic Partnership that would make it possible to operationalize it. Such a deepening of the relationship to take it beyond the transactional could be beneficial in multiple ways for India, especially in the context of growing rivalry with China. Indeed, concluding the negotiations and signing the FTA will allow for a reduction of India's dependence on imports from China.

India has managed to some extent to use its political and economic relations with the EU to achieve its own foreign and economic policy goals. This primarily transactional impetus in India's foreign policy towards the EU has been clearly visible, as demonstrated in the three case studies. The case studies also highlight the limitations of transactionalism. To secure greater mutual benefits from the relationship, India and the EU will need to invest more financial and human resources in cooperation between summits, which are not even conducted annually (see Table 1). Indian and EU officials will also need to meet regularly in structured dialogues, committees, and working groups, focusing on selected issues. It could also be useful to recruit more stakeholders – from lawmakers and civil society members to business leaders and invite them into the dialogue, shoring up funding sources for joint initiatives and building a wider base of support for the partnership in India and the EU. Moreover, India and the EU will need to acknowledge that a lack of real mutual understanding has led to an overall underperforming partnership. Due to this, the EU's efforts to project itself as a normative power in relations with India are still limited. Increased funding in research and education will help to bring down the lack of knowledge and understanding of India in Europe, and vice versa. The EU may also consider changing its narration and policy and not focusing predominantly on labor and environmental standards. Democracy and liberalism should also be key points in the EU agenda with the understanding that India has its traditions in this regard.

Above all, to forge a more consequential partnership, both India and the EU will need to rise above transactionalism by developing and implementing a strategic vision for leveraging their formidable complementary strengths as leading democratic actors in world affairs to advance shared goals regionally and globally.

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