

## BREXIT: IMPACT ON INDIA-EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP

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### ABSTRACT

*The 14<sup>th</sup> Summit between the European Union and India was held on 6 October 2017 in New Delhi, marking 55 years of diplomatic relationship. A joint statement on combatting terrorism, on clean energy and climate change's and smart and sustainable urbanisation were adopted. India and the European Union (EU) have been close allies and the bilateral relationships between the two were upgraded to a strategic level in 2004. An unprecedented change came in June 2016 when nearly 52 percent people decided to "BREXIT" and leave EU reversing the decision taken in 1975 to join the common market. In such scenario, the exit of UK significantly affected the relationship between India and EU and prompted India to reconsider its ties with EU. The strengthening of India- EU strategic relationship is significant not only for both powers but expected to be good for the entire world. In this context, present paper attempts at analyzing the dimensions and levels of cooperation between India and EU and to further explore the impact of UK "BREXIT" on the India-EU strategic relationship.*

**Keywords:** BREXIT, European Union, Bilateral, Strategic Relationship, United Kingdom.

### INTRODUCTION

The term 'BREXIT' is the amalgamation of two words "UK" and "exit" and commonly used as the intention of UK to withdraw from the EU.<sup>1</sup> BREXIT is derived from Grexit analogy referring to the hypothetical withdrawal of Greece from Eurozone and perhaps EU also. The provisions to withdraw from EU was included in 2007 and mentioned under Article 50 of the EU Charter. United Kingdom was not the signatory to the Treaty of Rome that created the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957. It was only after the third application that UK got the membership. The EEC became the EU on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1993 after the conclusion of Treaty of Maastricht.<sup>2</sup>

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There has been confusion and an atmosphere of differences in UK for the referendum on UK and EU membership. By 2012, in order to gauge public support and appease opponents, Prime Minister David Cameron rejected calls for a referendum but suggested the possibility of a future referendum.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, on 22 February 2016 in a speech to the House of Commons, Cameron recognized 23 June 2016 as the date for referendum and set out the legal framework and circumstances for withdrawal from EU citing the Article 50 of Lisbon Treaty. Accordingly, the referendum vote was held on 23 June 2016 to decide whether the UK should leave or remain in the EU.<sup>4</sup>

### **AFTERMATH OF BREXIT IN UK**

The referendum in which nearly every citizen took part resulted in drastic change in political spectrum of UK. Overnight nationwide petitions came up for another referendum which was thoroughly rejected by the spokesperson of David Cameron.<sup>5</sup> At that juncture, Theresa May denied the need for second referendum and called the referendum as final and declared BREXIT as BREXIT. Ultimately, on 9 July, 2016 government rejected the petition for second referendum. Subsequent developments lead to the BREXIT and reshuffling in political leadership. Theresa May replaced David Cameron and became the new Prime Minister. Philip Hammond was appointed as Chancellor of the Exchequer while Boris Johnson was appointed Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and David Davis became Secretary of State for Exiting the EU.<sup>6</sup>

### **INDIA-EU RELATIONS**

After independence, India adopted the policy of Non-Alignment in order to protect its sovereignty from the rivalry of two superpowers. The paradigm shift in Indian foreign policy came with the disintegration of USSR that marked the end of Cold War era. In the changing global order, India attempted to forge strategic ties with major regional and global powers.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, India-EU relationship is not new and predated to the early 1960s, when India established the diplomatic ties with EEC which itself was formed in 1957. By 1994 an Agreement of Cooperation was signed between the two that gave a new height to bilateral relations. With the beginning of new millennium, the First India-EU Summit was held on 28 June 2000 in Lisbon that marked a new era in the evolution of the relationship. Till now, 14 annual Summits have been held. By 2004 in the 5<sup>th</sup> Hague Summit, a significant change occurred when the relationship was converted from bilateral to 'strategic'. In 2005 a Joint Action Plan was initiated that was reviewed in 2008 endorsing the dialogue and consultation mechanisms in political and economic spheres, enhancing trade and investment, and bringing peoples and cultures together.<sup>8</sup> In 2016, a new zenith in the relationship was achieved when 13<sup>th</sup> India –EU Summit held in Brussels adopted the Agenda for 2020. This agenda paved the way for cooperation on a variety of issues ranging from nuclear cooperation to investments, cyber security, climate change and 5G communications. During 14<sup>th</sup> India-EU Summit held in New Delhi, joint statement on combatting terrorism, on clean energy and climate change; and on Smart and Sustainable urbanisation were adopted.

## INDIA-EU STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP

Despite the fact that both India and EU are in different geographical landscapes and not sharing borders, they do enjoy healthy economic-strategic ties. Traditionally, the relationship between the two was not beyond mercenary relations. By the 21<sup>st</sup> century the relations developed to the strategic level. In the context of changing global order after the demise of USSR, a significant change in the relationship between the two is visible. The end of the Cold War opened up the new dimensions in global strategic environment. The keystones to this strategic partnership have been mutual respect, shared values and common interests.<sup>9</sup> Today both India and EU understands the potential in each other and have mutual stake in strengthening the cooperation. This sense of mutual benefits clearly may contribute to further the wellbeing and development on both sides. The importance of this tie is reflected in the deeper level of strategic cooperation which encompasses not only choices and priorities but also the partnership of necessity in order to achieve and sustain convergence together. Nevertheless, with the Strategic Relationship Agreement signed in 2004 the significant importance of the cooperation between the two is accepted, still progress is not up to the expectations and much needed to be done in this respect. At ground level 'both sides need to acknowledge each partner's individual realities.'<sup>10</sup>

## STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF EU-INDIA RELATIONSHIP

India has always believed that it would shape the future of the world. In recent years India's dream of claiming its rightful place has come ever closer. In the wake of changing world order due to the end of the Cold War and with the liberalization of Indian economy in late 20<sup>th</sup> century, Indian foreign policy have been determined to maintain close relations with every strategic partner. While counting national interests, New Delhi ensures that a strategic relation with one partner doesn't come with the expense of other partner. Thus India considers every strategic partner as important irrespective of the region it belongs to. Therefore partnership with EU is important both strategically and economically to Indian interests. Also EU attracted entire world by making itself a significant global player in changing world order and prompted India and other countries to forge strategic ties with it. Hence, 'EU's growing influences not only at the regional but also the global politico-security arrangement are of keen interests for India'.<sup>11</sup>

The relevance of India-EU strategic partnership can be seen in the fact that both partners share a vision of democratic, multi-cultural and multi-polar global order. The Indian side perceives EU as potential economic and political partner. The realist approach of New Delhi is aimed at "achieving security characterized by efforts to manage asymmetries, not eliminating them, and managing the multi-cornered strategic context to India's advantage".<sup>12</sup> The strategic engagement with EU could help India in quenching its thirst for playing an important role both globally and regionally. At both levels this relationship may also help in establishing peace, stability and security apart from the bilateral ambitions. Terrorism becomes a global challenge to which both partners are committed to fight along with the commitment to eliminate other threats such as arms and human trafficking. Both allies promoted democracy, human rights and nuclear disarmament. In a Joint Statement at 5<sup>th</sup> India-EU Hague Summit in 2004, they together pledged '*for recognition of shared*

concerns of the international community regarding the danger posed by the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons including the acquisition by non-state actors, and resolved to enhance collective action to fight the proliferation of WMD as well as the means of delivery'.<sup>13</sup> Further, they agreed that a strong multi-cultural consultation and an effective export control measures for dual-use goods is required to overcome the proliferation challenges. The statement further depicted that 'such measures should not hamper international co-operation in materials, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes'.<sup>14</sup> From above discussion it is clear that cooperation between India and EU is of utmost significance at all levels whether it is international, regional or bilateral.

### **TURNING POINT IN INDIA-EU STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP**

The first India-EU Lisbon Summit of 2000 marked the beginning of new era in strategic partnership between the two partners. This Summit was a major turning point in the history of India-EU relations. This Summit "for the first time brought about an understanding between the two on the need to positively engage through bilateral dialogue in all areas of common interests and concerns".<sup>15</sup> In the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, the 2004 Hague Summit firmly recognized the Indian position at international level and strengthened the relationship from bilateral to strategic level including political, geopolitical, trade and economic aspects. This development clearly adds significance to the below par strategic engagement between India and EU. Subsequently, the Joint Action Plan (JAP) was adopted in 2005 which underlined a roadmap for actions. The JAP committed itself to the following issues:

1. Strengthening dialogue and consultation mechanisms;
2. Deepening political dialogue and cooperation;
3. Bringing together people and cultures;
4. Enhancing economic policy dialogue and cooperation;
5. Developing trade and investment.

The JAP was reviewed in 2008 adding the following new areas of importance:

1. Promoting peace and comprehensive security;
2. Promoting sustainable development;
3. Promoting research and technology;
4. Promoting people to people and cultural exchange.

### **INDIA-EU POLITICAL RELATIONS**

On 6 October 2017, 14<sup>th</sup> India-EU Summit was held in New Delhi. Indian PM led the Indian delegation and EU was led by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker and the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk. Summit welcomed the recent launch of the Investment Facilitation Mechanism of EU Investment in India. On 30 March 2016, the 13th India-EU Summit was held in Brussels after a gap of four years. The Indian Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi led the Indian delegation. On the other side, EU was represented by Mr Donald Tusk, President of the European Council and Mr Jean

Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission. Also, the President of the European Parliament Mr Martin Schulz, President of the European Investment Bank, Mr Werner Hoyer, and EU High Representative Ms Federica Mogherini attended the Summit. The Summit concluded by adoption of seven documents including a Joint Statement and Agenda for Action 2020. This joint statement included:

- An India-EU Joint Declaration on the fight against terrorism;
- India-EU Joint Declaration on Common Agenda for Migration and Mobility;
- Joint Declaration on Water Partnership;
- Joint Declaration on Clean Energy and Climate Partnership.

Apart from this, the release of the first tranche of € 200 million of the total €450 million loan from the European Investment Bank for the Lucknow Metro project was also finalized during the Summit.<sup>16</sup>

Another level of engagement between India and EU have been materialized through regular interaction at Foreign Ministry level. On 30 January 2013, 23<sup>rd</sup> India-EU Ministerial Meeting took place in Brussels led by the then External Affairs Minister, Shri Salman Khurshid, while the EU side was represented by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton. In this meeting, international and regional issues of mutual interest were discussed apart from the bilateral relations. In 2015, Minister of State for External Affairs, Gen (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Retd), led the Indian delegation at the 12<sup>th</sup> Asia-Europe (ASEM) Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Luxembourg from 4-7 November 2015. From October 4-5, 2016, a Conference on Afghanistan was held in Brussels organized by the EU. Later in October 2016, Mr. Karmenu Vella, EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, visited India and signed the MoU on India-EU Water Partnership. Also, in November 2016 Mr. Jyrki Katainen, the Vice President of the European Commission for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness visited India. In the meeting both sides have instituted Foreign Policy Consultations at the level of Secretaries.

## **INDIA-EU ECONOMIC AND TRADE RELATIONS**

An important aspect of India-EU relations are economic and trade relations which transforms the strategic ties between the two. Today India emerged as a rising economic power. Since the advent of economic liberalization, the Indian economy made remarkable progress and attracted various global powers including US, Russia and EU. In the new millennium, the economic growth reached 8.5 percent and in 2006 it touched the growth rate of 9.5 percent. In terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), India emerged as the twelfth-largest global economy while in purchasing power parity (PPP)<sup>17</sup> it counted as the fifth-largest global economy having huge scope for progress in future. The success stories of EU's regional and economic cooperation and significant growth of Indian economy made both India and EU compatible towards strengthening economic and trade ties. India offers the conducive environment for economic success and has recorded as the 9<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner to EU in 2015. EU too is the largest regional trading partner of India having bilateral trade recorded at € 105.2 billion (comprising trade in goods of € 77.5 billion and trade in services of €27.7 billion) in 2015.

Same year, India's export (goods) to the EU stood at € 39.41 billion (\$43.73 billion) while India's imports from the EU were valued at € 38.1 billion (\$42.3 billion). In 2015, the trade balance in goods was in India's favour by €1.3 billion (\$1.44 billion). While in terms of services, the bilateral trade reached at €27.7 billion (\$30.75 billion) in 2015 comprising Indian exports of services to the EU worth € 13.67 billion (\$15.17 billion) and Indian imports from the EU worth €14.03 billion (\$15.58 billion). India's bilateral trade with the EU saw a huge decline during the first eight months of 2016 (Jan- Aug 2016) which stood at €51.2 billion while India's exports valued at €26.6 billion and India's imports from the EU at €24.6 billion. Over the period from April 2000 to April 2016, FDI equity flow from EU countries totaled \$73.97 billion. At present, 25.34 percent of total FDI flows to India (\$291.87billion) comes from EU. Thus, EU is India's largest source of FDI.

Despite facing challenges due to the withdrawal of few European countries from EU, India-EU merchandise trade has increased from over US\$ 21 billion in 2000-01 to over US\$ 82 billion during the financial year 2011-12 representing a four-fold increase in a span of twelve years. European countries accounted for about 20.17 percent of India's total trade during 2009-10. During 2010-11 (April –September), India's trade with Europe increased by 17.74 percent as compared to the corresponding period in 2009-10 with exports increasing by 23.25 per cent and imports by 13.87 percent.<sup>18</sup> The significant aspect of the merchandise trade between India and EU is that the total trade volume has been improving continuously since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Since 2007, India and the EU are in the process of negotiating a bilateral Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA). As of late, both sides are discussing the modalities of resumption of BTIA talks on a fast track basis. The India-EU Joint Commission dealing with economic and commercial issues meets annually, as done by its three Sub-Commissions on Trade, Economic Cooperation and Development Cooperation. The India-EU Joint Commission last met in New Delhi on 26 June 2014. The last meeting of the India-EU Sub-Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation was held in New Delhi in October 2015.

## **SECURITY AND COUNTER-TERRORISM PARTNERSHIP**

Terrorism has been an age-old global challenge which affects entire international community; it becomes political as well as a legal and a military issue in the modern times. Terrorism has afflicted both India and the EU with the growing incidences of violent attacks in recent years. In such scenario, the relationship between India and EU is of immense significance which has steadily transformed from economic to strategic level. The other important aspects of cooperation such as defense and security, counter-terrorism are the need of hour for both partners in order to establish peace and to further prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>19</sup> India and EU attached great importance to counter-terrorism cooperation in the framework of United Nations and shared a commitment to universal ratification and full implementation of all UN Counter-Terrorism Conventions.

In March 2016, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Belgium and addressed Indian diaspora. In his address he made clarion call for the collective efforts to define terrorism

at global level and the need to find out ways to fight this menace. He further said that “*Terrorism is not a challenge to one country or one region. Terrorism is challenging humanity so the need of the hour is that anybody who believes in humanity, all powers, have to come together to fight terror.*”

For both sides, the success over counter-terrorism should be examined via areas of convergence including cyber security, disarmament and growing vulnerabilities of State towards terror. In the wake of Paris attacks in November 2015 followed by Brussels on March 2016, various measures taken up on a war footing to meet the challenges of European security. One of the countering measure taken up at EU Interior and Justice Ministers meeting on 20 November 2015, was to implement immediately necessary systematic and coordinated checks at borders, including for EU citizens.<sup>20</sup> The random check would be done using police databases. The EU is strictly monitoring travel and money transfers and also seeks to store and assess flight data in the future.<sup>21</sup> Given the migrant crisis that Europe is presently facing, immigration xenophobia and its backlashes are raising its ugly head. In this regard, EU can tap into India’s migration problem management.<sup>22</sup>

In the aftermath of London 2004 and Madrid 2005 terror attacks and 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks in 2008, India and EU brought a Joint Declaration on International Terrorism in Brussels on 10 December 2010, which reaffirmed their “commitments to enhance counter-terrorism cooperation, as contained in the 2005 EU-India Joint Action Plan, as well as in the 2009 EU-India Summit Declaration”.<sup>23</sup> Also both sides agreed to have high-level meetings on counter-terrorism within security dialogue.

The Sixth EU-India Security Dialogue was held in Brussels on 25 October 2012. An EU-India practitioner’s workshop on counterterrorism was also held in Hague on 11-12 December 2012. Similarly, there were meetings and consultations on issues of cyber security, nuclear proliferation and disarmament and counter piracy by Indian and European Union counterparts. In brief, the evaluation of counter-terror cooperation depends on following three factors:

- The presence of EU as an actor in counter-terrorism at world politics;
- expectations and perception of India from international cooperation and;
- Opportunities offered by EU to India in combating counter-terrorism.

The India-EU Joint Declaration on Fighting against Terrorism was signed on 30 March 2016. It is noteworthy for three reasons. First, India and EU called for ‘perpetrators of attacks in Paris, Brussels, Pathankot, Gurdaspur and Mumbai to be brought to justice. Hence, leaders called for decisive and united actions to be taken against ISIL (Da’esh), Lashkar-e-Tayibba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, the Haqqani Network and other internationally active terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and its affiliates’.<sup>24</sup>

Secondly, it calls for the need of a comprehensive approach to address terrorism. It was ‘resolved to step up cooperation to prevent and counter violent extremism and radicalization, disrupt recruitment, terrorist movements and the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, stop sources of terrorist financing, dismantle terrorist infrastructure and prevent the supply of arms to terrorists’. Thirdly, ‘the concerns were expressed at the increasing trend of radicalization of youth and the misuse of the internet. The emphasis was on the need to develop bilateral

and multilateral cooperation in the field of information and communication technology, including IT service providers to minimize the use of cyberspace by terrorist groups and to counter extremist narratives online'. Here it is pertinent to note that in 2015, India-EU dialogue was initiated to discuss cyber-security, cyber-crime, Internet governance, standards and regulation, capacity building and research and development issues from an international policy perspective.<sup>25</sup>

A noteworthy cooperation between the two sides is seen in terms of exchanging the list of banned organizations and smoothening the process of extradition by due coordination with the respective intelligence agencies (CBI-Europol Cooperation, 2008). The latest updated list released by the EU in March 2015 already includes Babbar Khalsa, Hizbul Mujahideen, the International Sikh Youth Federation, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Khalistan Zindabad Force.<sup>26</sup> The Indian Ministry of Home Affairs has a list of 38 banned terrorist organizations.<sup>27</sup> The inclusion of more entities targeting India on the EU's own list would send a strong signal of cooperation. In the meantime, Indian experts could learn about inter-state cooperation and cyber security from the EU Counter- Terrorism coordinator through existing dialogues.

The EU and India continue to work actively towards a swift finalization of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism at the UN. They not only welcomed the adoption of the first UN Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the General Assembly but also expressed their commitment to actively support the implementation of the Strategy in all its dimensions. The leaders of the two sides affirmed their commitment to combat terrorism with full respect of obligations under international law, in particular, human rights law, refugee law and international humanitarian law. Since then there has been a regular consultation on combating the menace of a single largest threat to peace and security. Strengthening cooperation to combat terrorism continues to be one of the priority areas for the EU-India Strategic Partnership.<sup>28</sup>

## **IMPACT OF BREXIT UPON INDIA**

Following possible impact scenario is delineated:

1. The first impact would be visible on currency volatility as there is a possibility of devaluation of the pound and euro. The markets across the world including India cannot remain immune to this. Sensex and Nifty would tumble in the short-run.
2. With the pound expected to fall 20 percent in the case of a BREXIT, Indian companies with a sizeable presence in the UK will have to bear the brunt. The Indian government will have to keep watching currency-based volatility, both in the short and the medium term and also to look at the impact on overall trade. India will have to rework the proposed free trade agreement with the single-currency bloc in view of BREXIT.
3. UK has always been a gateway for Indian firms to enter into EU. After BREXIT, this will cause short-term distress to Indian firms. However, in the longer run, BREXIT could help strengthen India-UK economic relationship as the UK seeks to compensate for the loss of preferential access to EU markets.

4. BREXIT adds significant pressures on the rupee. While the rupee has depreciated by a lower extent against the US dollar compared to other emerging market currencies that could well be owing to RBI's intervention to stem volatility.
5. Indian IT companies may need to establish separate offices and hire different teams for the UK and the EU after the fallout, putting heavy expenditure burden on IT companies in the near-term.
6. BREXIT might impact India-UK trade relations too. The UK is listed at 18 among India's top 25 trading partners. India's exports to the UK were \$5.3 billion in 2014-15 (share of 3% in India's total exports). After BREXIT, India may increase its exports to the UK, as the goods supplied by EU producers and the existing FTA partners of the EU will be subject to the same tariff as applicable to goods imported from India.
7. The pound is falling continuously after BREXIT. This continuous fall of the pound will immediately shave off the cost of funds as Indian companies will now have to pay less when they are repaying loans.

## CONCLUSION

India and EU transforms their ties of cooperation from bilateral to strategic one in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since 2004 the relationship between the two have reached the height of convergence of interests and recognitions of each other's relevance in the global arena. The areas of cooperation not remain limited to trade or economics but includes various others aspects such as political, defense and security in terms of counter terrorism, nuclear proliferation, disarmament, counter piracy, cyber security to environmental issues such as climate change and foreign direct investments and technological advancements. In sum, the relationship is important not at regional level but is of utmost significance at international level. The Year 2016 has become a landmark in strengthening of ties between the two. Still much remains to be done. In the wake of BREXIT, the strategic relationship clearly affected Indian interests at global level in terms of currency volatility and devaluation of euro but BREXIT could also help in strengthening India-UK economic ties. India has only recently allowed 100 per cent FDI in defense. Therefore, local companies would not be impacted. In the procurement policy, India has specified that indigenously designed, developed and manufactured products will get the first preference. Thus in long terms, one can hope for better prospects of cooperation between the two sides. As a rising economic power with immense scope in the European market and as an important player in counter-terrorism with a presence of strong Indian diaspora in Europe, India would continue to vie for heightened significance to EU in the near future.

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