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GLOBAL GROUNDLINES



The India-Europe Reset

India-Europe ties are evolving beyond trade into a strategic partnership spanning defence, technology and geopolitical resilience. With new institutional frameworks in place, the focus is shifting from diplomatic commitments to tangible economic and security outcomes

The India-Europe relationship is acquiring a different strategic vocabulary. Trade remains its economic foundation, but security, defence, technological sovereignty and geopolitical resilience are increasingly shaping its direction. As the global order becomes more fragmented, both sides have compelling reasons to look beyond conventional economic diplomacy.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's November 12 meeting with Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Security and Defence, reflects this changing engagement. Their discussions covered security, economic and technological cooperation, people-to-people ties and the Ukraine conflict. The meeting was significant not simply for its diplomatic symbolism, but for the questions it placed at the centre of the India-Europe conversation.

The relationship already has considerable institutional momentum. At the India-EU Summit on January 27, 2026, the two sides concluded negotiations on a landmark free trade agreement and signed a Security and Defence Partnership. The latter establishes a framework covering maritime security, cyber-defence, counterterrorism and space, alongside an annual security and defence dialogue and a Defence Industry Forum.

The economic numbers underline the scale of the opportunity. EU-India trade in goods exceeded €118 billion in 2025, while trade in services crossed €67 billion.

European foreign direct investment in India stood at approximately €132 billion in 2024, making the EU one of India's leading investment partners. More than 6,000 European companies operate in India, collectively providing around three million jobs. These are not marginal economic connections; they represent an established commercial relationship with considerable room for expansion.

But the strategic case extends beyond commerce. Russia's war in Ukraine has forced Europe to reconsider its defence preparedness, energy dependencies and assumptions about security.

Meanwhile, India's geopolitical priorities are being shaped by an increasingly contested Indo-Pacific, its complex relationship with China and the imperative to diversify technology and defence supply chains.

The two sides do not approach every international issue from the same position. India's continued engagement with Moscow and Europe's position on the Ukraine conflict illustrate the differences. Yet their ability to pursue cooperation despite these disagreements is itself an important feature of the relationship.

For Europe, India offers a major economic partner and an increasingly consequential presence in the Indo-Pacific. For India, Europe offers advanced industrial capabilities, research ecosystems, capital and access to technologies critical to its long-term development. Defence manufacturing, semiconductors, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and maritime security are natural areas for deeper collaboration.

There is also a larger geopolitical calculation. Neither India nor Europe benefits from a world in which economic dependencies become instruments of political leverage. Diversification, strategic resilience and multiple centres of influence are becoming essential to protecting national interests.

Jaishankar's engagement with European security leadership should therefore be read against the larger institutional reset already under way. The question is no longer whether India and Europe have enough common ground to cooperate. The architecture for cooperation is taking shape. The harder task is translating agreements into industrial partnerships, technological capacity and tangible strategic outcomes.

In an increasingly uncertain world, the India-Europe relationship may emerge as one of the more consequential partnerships to watch — precisely because it does not require either side to surrender its strategic independence.



TOP WATCH



THE CHIP SOVEREIGNTY IMPERATIVE

The Jensen Huang controversy is a reminder that semiconductors are no longer merely a technology business; they sit at the intersection of corporate governance, national security and geopolitics. The Nvidia chief's reported relationships with individuals under scrutiny over alleged Chinese intelligence links have raised questions about chip supply chains and strategic vulnerabilities. For India, the episode reinforces an existing caution: dependence on foreign technology carries economic and security risks. New Delhi is therefore pursuing semiconductor self-reliance through the India Semiconductor Mission, domestic fabrication, advanced packaging and indigenous chip design. The larger ambition is clear: build technological sovereignty, not just manufacturing capacity.



THE DIPLOMATIC BALANCING ACT

India is quietly expanding its diplomatic engagement on the Russia-Ukraine war, keeping channels open with Moscow, Kyiv and Washington. On November 9, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar spoke with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov about the conflict and ongoing diplomatic initiatives. The call followed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's conversation with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, during which India reiterated its willingness to contribute to peace efforts. New Delhi's discussions have focused on practical concerns, including Black Sea shipping safety, grain exports and energy infrastructure. The approach reflects India's strategic autonomy: maintaining relationships across opposing camps while seeking diplomatic outcomes that protect wider economic and humanitarian interests.



THE TAIWAN STRAIT FLASHPOINT

The Taiwan Strait returned to the centre of global security concerns on November 12, as G7 foreign ministers issued a joint statement warning that China's increasingly assertive activity east of Taiwan threatened regional stability and freedom of navigation. The declaration opposed unilateral attempts to change the status quo through force, coercion or intimidation. Taiwan has reported increasingly frequent Chinese coast guard patrols and military activity that it believes could rehearse a maritime blockade. Beijing rejected the G7 statement as interference in its internal affairs. The episode underscores how a regional military confrontation could rapidly become a global trade and security crisis.
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HORMUZ: THE ENERGY SECURITY WARNING

The Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical energy transit routes, faced renewed shipping disruption on November 11 and 12. Iran reported explosions involving four oil tankers, alleging that the vessels had ignored warnings and entered restricted waters. The claims have not been independently verified by Reuters. Separately, the UK Maritime Trade Operations agency reported an unidentified projectile striking a vessel northwest of Ras Al-Khaimah, setting its engine room on fire. The crew evacuated safely. With global energy markets dependent on uninterrupted Gulf shipping, the incidents underline the vulnerability of maritime trade to escalating regional tensions.

HOW WE CAN SUPPORT

First Partners (https://first.partners/) is a leading India-based corporate affairs consultancy and has been ranked among The 100 Best Corporate PR Agencies in the World by PRovoke Media. We are the India affiliate of the Milan-headquartered SEC Newgate Group.

Through strategic insights and communication that help decode complexity and shape outcomes, we support corporates in navigating a transforming world. In an era of accelerating disruption, we help business leaders anticipate, adapt, and act. Global South Advisory is our public policy research and advisory practice.

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- **Drive stakeholder engagement and coalition management** – Initiate dialogue with the stakeholders that matter by building or aligning with coalitions, think tanks, civic groups, trade bodies, industry associations, civil society groups, community voices, experts, and local influencers.

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