



The Future Talks to the Past: BRICS Countries' Strategies Towards the European Union

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Timofei Bordachev

Can BRICS Pursue a Common EU strategy? In Lieu of a Preface

The European Union and BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) are formally similar interstate organisations according to the institutional theory of international relations. However, in reality they are antagonists, and their antagonism is conceptual – the EU and BRICS embody the old and the new in international politics and the methods of interstate institutional cooperation. Now that legitimate grounds have arisen to question the future of institutional forms of interstate cooperation in principle, the fates of the EU and BRICS are of equal interest for understanding the foundations on which these states can preserve such major achievements of the 20th century.

The aim of this report is to analyse the national approaches of the BRICS countries to today's Europe, its role in world affairs and the priorities of national governments in this area. Based on this analysis, the BRICS countries will be able to gradually develop a strategy for cooperating with major external partners.

To some extent, this report is an experiment that applies to the EU the very approach that the EU has long taken towards the outside world: today's Europe is treated here not as a leading player but as an object of the national policies and strategies of a group of large states, two of which – India and China – are the first and second most populous countries in the world. It is unlikely that in the future BRICS-EU relations will be based on parity between the two associations. The history of international politics is devoid of such examples for a reason. As they develop, regional interstate associations inevitably strive to create a collective interest based on the national interests and values of their participants. While certainly useful for their sustainability, this inevitably fuels egotism in relations with external partners, all the more so as foreign policy values continue to become an increasingly divisive factor in interstate relations.

One way or another, the international landscape will gradually level out – it will not have clearly defined leaders able to put forward universal institutional or legal frameworks for others to adopt. Europe can no longer expect its principles to influence the conduct of others and make them more conducive partners for European states pursuing their self-interest. That is why, looking to the future, we need at least a rough sense of the character of relations that will take shape between powers or interstate associations that view themselves as equal. In this context, how the BRICS countries see Europe, and what they want to get from it, holds not only theoretical but significant practical interest for us.

Modern Europe embodies the international order created by the West after World War II, which spread to the rest of the world after 1991. The EU institutions and rules are based on the striving of the EU members to prioritise a common foundation of values, solidarity on key foreign policy issues, the negotiated settlement of disputes and the end of military force in their relations with one another. European integration is based on deal struck by a group of states in which Germany and France were the dominant economic and military-political players as well as the main beneficiaries of the entire integration project. US military leadership was a key condition of its success and the survival of the entire liberal international order.

Now this international order is coming to an end as a result of major changes in the global balance of power. The relative diminishment of Western countries' ability to project power has led to fundamental changes both in international politics and at the regional level. European integration has come under stress and requires an internal overhaul to contend with external challenges and accumulated internal problems. The balance of power within the EU is also changing, with Germany increasingly claiming de facto leadership as Europe's most economically advanced country. And divisions are emerging in the EU – both at the surface and below – over questions of values.

In turn, while BRICS is the product of a liberal international order that welcomes any forms of interstate institutional cooperation, it also offers an alternative whose defining feature is to prevent the emergence of a single leader. We cannot assume that even two countries will lead the rest. Both the largest members of BRICS – China, India and Russia – and those with lesser influence in international affairs for the time being – Brazil and South Africa – cannot count on occupying dominant positions in

the association. So far, the history of international institutions lacks any successful examples of a community where no single participant has a clearly defined leading role. In this sense, BRICS is a kind of prototype of international institutions in the future multipolar world where the conduct of states is primarily constrained not by bloc discipline but by an ability to correlate one's own interests and values with those of partners.

All BRICS countries are linked with Europe by a host of political and economic contacts and interests. They see the EU not only as a potential competitor and investor but also a factor in their relations with each other and their cooperation with the United States. All BRICS countries have their own unique experience of relations with European states and the EU as an institution. The authors of this report believe this experience may soon allow them to consider how they might elaborate a common BRICS framework for a collective EU strategy.

The report is a collection of five essays written by prominent experts and scholars from Russia, Brazil, India, China and South Africa. Rather than try to unify the structure of the collection or divide it into sections by theme, each essay is the product of the author's individual approach. Indeed, it would have been methodologically presumptuous and politically inaccurate to try and squeeze the large, self-sufficient countries of BRICS into some uniform framework. The most important task for the authors and their editor was to take a first step towards understanding what a common BRICS strategy towards the EU could hypothetically look like.

There are no political motives behind the ordering of the chapters, either. This is a Russian report and of all BRICS members, Russia has the most complicated yet unambiguous history of relations with Europe. Russia alone has been striving to become an element of the European balance of power for several centuries. We are witnessing the completion of this process now, though its outcome is far from certain. India also has a unique experience among the BRICS countries. Its legacy of colonial relations is the most vivid and influences its national politics and discourse. China regards Europe from an elevated position by virtue of its size and place in the global balance of power. That said, China also feels phantom pains from its past foreign policy humiliation at the hands of the Old World. Brazil and South Africa view the EU largely through the prism of their regional interests and ambitions in Africa and Latin America.

This report does not contain any specific recommendations or conclusions summing up the national positions of the BRICS countries, which would be premature at present. At the same time, it is perfectly clear that a discussion of the future of BRICS collective interest in Europe is somewhat overdue if anything, and we are trying to remedy this oversight.

Dmitry Suslov

Russia's Approach to the EU as a BRICS Member: From Unique to Normal

Russia enjoys a unique place among the BRICS countries in its relations with the EU given its European geography, history and civilization. Russia's relationship with the EU is existential. The bulk of Russia's population and industrial capacity is located in its European part. Over the past 300 years, Western and Central Europe have been the drivers of Russia's modernisation. Most of the military aggressions against Russia, including invasions with the potential to wipe out Russia as a state, came from Europe as well. Europe was the main front in the Cold War. The economies of Russia and the EU are interdependent and complementary. Even six years after the onset of the Ukraine crisis and the collapse of the old model of relations, amid sanctions and counter-sanctions, the EU remains Russia's key trading partner. In turn, Russia is the main supplier of energy to the EU, which means that, political rhetoric aside, cooperation with the EU and its individual member states is much more important to Russia than to other BRICS states.

But the main difference between Russia and the rest of BRICS countries in terms of relations with the EU lies elsewhere. Russia is the only BRICS member that the EU has sought to Europeanise as a matter of policy, attempting to harmonise a significant portion of Russia's legislation,

standards and principles of political and economic development with its own in the hope that Russia would eventually become a de facto – or even de jure – part of the political, economic and integration space oriented towards the EU as an associated state. In 2002, then President of the European Commission Romano Prodi described the relationship Brussels was seeking with Moscow as “unification of everything except institutions.” Basically, an association model. The EU has not pursued this policy towards any other BRICS country or centre of power.

Moreover, for at least 15 years, until the second half of the 2000s, Russia had been striving for deeper integration with the EU and mistakenly believed that a closer relationship, short of formal accession as a permanent member, would promote the country’s economic modernisation and help safeguard Russian sovereignty. Speaking before the German Bundestag in September 2001, President Putin suggested that Europe “combine its potential with Russia’s human, territorial and natural resources, as well as its economic, cultural and defence capabilities.” In 2003, Russia and the EU developed a proposal to create four common spaces: economic relations, internal security, external security, as well as science, education and culture. And in 2005, they adopted roadmaps to make these spaces a reality. However, the roadmap for a common economic space depended on bringing Russia’s legislation into greater alignment with EU legislation. Russia has never supported the idea of creating common spaces with any of the BRICS countries, including China. It would not be an overstatement to say that Russia’s policy was Eurocentric in the first half of the 2000s. Moscow hoped to forge with the EU a joint centre of power and economic development of global importance based on economic integration, close cooperation in the cultural sphere and partnership in security issues.

The Europeanisation model of Russia-EU relations reached a dead end in the second half of the 2000s. The expansion of the EU in 2004 and its support for the Orange Revolution in Ukraine sharply intensified the geopolitical rivalry between Russia and the EU in the post-Soviet space, resulting in the politicisation and securitisation of relations in the energy sphere. In response to the deterioration of relations with the United States and the EU in the second half of the 2000s and the

significant redistribution of power to non-Western countries, as well as the emerging multipolar global structure and Russia's economic revival, Moscow sought to position itself as an independent pole in a multipolar world and, consequently, to step up integration of the post-Soviet space with itself at the centre. The EU was seen as a rival bent on drawing post-Soviet countries out of Russia's integration orbit and into its own. This rivalry became more intense following the Georgia-South Ossetia conflict in August 2008, when the EU launched its Eastern Partnership policy for Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, with the aim of concluding association agreements.

Nevertheless, Europeanisation persisted as a component of Russian policy out of sheer inertia until the 2014 Ukraine crisis, and remnants of this model survive to this day. Back in 2013 – the year of the Euromaidan protests in Kiev – Russia's Foreign Policy Concept stated that the country's main goal was “to promote creating a common economic and humanitarian space from the Atlantic to the Pacific” in its relations with the EU, given its history as “an integral and inseparable part of European civilisation.” The roadmap for Russia-EU energy cooperation until 2050, which was approved the same year, noted that “by 2050, Russia and the EU should be part of a common, subcontinent wide, energy market,” which essentially meant creating a common Russia-EU energy market. Russia has not planned any such projects with any of the BRICS countries, including China, and it remains the only one of the five members to ever set this kind of goal with respect to the EU. The Russia-EU dialogue was also uniquely robust compared to Russia's foreign policy relations with other countries, or other BRICS countries' relations with the EU. Russia held two summits with the EU a year. There was a working institution of cooperation at the ministerial level called the Permanent Partnership Council and abundant sector-specific dialogues.

Russia-EU relations are distinct not just because Moscow saw the EU as the only pole of prosperity and source of modernisation available in the neighbourhood before the tectonic redistribution of global power in the second half of the 2000s. Up until the collapse

of relations with the EU in 2014, Russia dreamed of a Greater Europe stretching from the Atlantic to Vladivostok, based on equitable cooperation and even the merger of two integration projects, – namely, the EU and the EurAsEc-Customs Union-EAEU format which was built around Russia – not to mention close security cooperation. Russia's vision of a Greater Europe resonated with Gorbachev's "common European home": Russia didn't want to dissolve into the EU, but wanted the two main Eurasian centres of power – the EU and Russia – to closely cooperate and eliminate visa, economic, military and political barriers. There was every reason to believe that this kind of union would become one of the world's major centres of power comparable to the United States or China.

Russia was counting on a number of prerequisites to make this construct a reality. First, transforming the EU into an independent centre of power on security matters and ending US guardianship; second, centralising decision-making on foreign and security policy matters in the EU based on the positions of Western European countries, while neutralising the anti-Russian and pro-American influence of Poland and the Baltic countries. Indeed, Russia believes that the system's main drawback is the post-Cold War presence – and even domination – of the United States in the European security system, which is institutionally expressed in the form of NATO.

The US military presence is perceived as the main military threat facing Russia from the West, and the predominance of NATO in the architecture of European security and the United States in NATO is seen as the main reason why Russia has been pushed out of this architecture and why it is not possible to build an indivisible security system in Europe. It is believed that if the US military and geopolitical presence in Europe – and NATO with it – were to wane, the EU would see Russia as a natural partner and ally. The mutual gravitational pull between them would prevail, and Greater Europe in terms of security would become a reality, followed by the economic Greater Europe in the form of close EU-EAEU cooperation and integration. This, in turn, would demand that European countries take

more responsibility for the toughest security issues and formulate a genuinely centralised security and defence policy, including the creation of a collective defence system independent of NATO and higher defence spending, likewise independent of NATO.

In the second half of the 2010s, Moscow arrived at the conclusion that this scenario is highly unlikely, at least in the foreseeable future. The EU failed to become an independent geopolitical centre of power, or to take charge of the toughest security issues, and only clung more tightly to the United States. Neither the EU, nor individual Western European countries were willing to engage in dialogue with Russia without the United States on the greatest security challenges in Europe, such as missile defence, intermediate and shorter-range missiles, or reforming the European security architecture in general. Even during the presidency of Donald Trump, with his famously disparaging remarks about the EU and his conception of US defence commitments in NATO as a fee-for-service arrangement, discussions about the EU's "strategic autonomy" remained just that, discussions. Through gritted teeth, Europe prayed for Trump's departure and for the return of "normal" America, the benevolent hegemon, while continuing to show solidarity with the United States on all significant military security issues, such as the INF Treaty. Biden won the US presidential election promising to strengthen NATO and to maintain as inviolable the US presence and obligations in Europe and relations with the Western European countries in general, and so his victory was greeted with euphoria in the EU, which gave itself over to a sweet geopolitical slumber.

Likewise, hopes for greater centralisation of the decision-making process in the EU regarding foreign and security policy based on Western European positions failed to materialise. The influence of Poland and the Baltic countries not only didn't abate, but in many respects became decisive in the EU's policy towards its eastern neighbours and abruptly changed the common denominator in EU relations with Russia in the direction of alienation and deterrence. Poland's veto of talks on a new strategic agreement, which was supposed to replace the Russia-EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreement of 1994, lasted for 18 months

(from autumn 2006 to spring 2008) and showed that the EU is unable to safeguard its relations with Russia from the negative influence of “newcomers.” Moreover, the EU sided with them on many issues in their bilateral disputes with Russia.

Finally, leaving aside the United States, Poland and the Baltic states, the EU and Western European countries haven't shown any commitment to treating Russia as an equal partner, even as part of a Russia-oriented economic integration project. On the contrary, since at least 2003, when Brussels launched its neighbourhood policy, it has been pursuing a policy of undermining Russia's influence in the post-Soviet space and drawing the countries of the region into the EU integration orbit. This was evident in the EU's position on “frozen conflicts” in the post-Soviet space, colour revolutions in the region and post-revolutionary developments in Ukraine and Georgia, its policy in Central Asia, the Eastern Partnership policy, its Ukrainian policy after 2014 (which, among other things, allowed Kiev to openly and consistently sabotage the Minsk agreements and not only get away with it, but even enjoy outside support), and its flat-out refusal to recognise the EAEU and the Customs Union before that. There's no sign of “harmonising and aligning interests of European and Eurasian integration processes,” which are mentioned in Russia's Foreign Policy Concept of 2016 as a prerequisite for establishing “a common economic and humanitarian space from the Atlantic to the Pacific.” The exact opposite is unfolding right before our eyes.

As a result, Russia came to the conclusion that the Greater Europe idea should be shelved for the foreseeable future in favour of Greater Eurasia, characterised by close economic cooperation and the absence of geopolitical rivalry within the Russia-EAEU-China-SCO space. The impetus was the historic 2015 Moscow-Beijing agreement on aligning the Eurasian Economic Union and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. Comparing current relations between Russia, the EAEU and China with Russia-EU relations, it is clear that Greater Eurasia has already taken root, as demonstrated by the intensity of political and diplomatic relations from Brest to Shanghai, which cannot

be compared with the current frozen political dialogue with the EU and its key states that promises to continue in the near term. China has already become Russia's main trade and economic partner, and Russian-Chinese trade is double that of Russia and Germany. Unlike Europe, there is no zero-sum game in the Greater Eurasia space. China is not seeking to undermine the Russia-centric EAEU or the CSTO and has signed a trade agreement with the Eurasian Union. In turn, Russia does not consider China's economic presence in Central Asia a threat.

At the same time, the formation of Greater Eurasia is entirely complementary with Russia's BRICS membership. Russia considers itself not so much an ally of China as a separate independent pole in a multipolar world, building relations based on an equal partnership with Beijing. Greater Eurasia is the result of a mutual decision by two independent centres of power to abandon the zero-sum game in their shared neighbourhood and to cooperate for the benefit of both countries' economic prosperity and security. BRICS, meanwhile, embodies Russia's position as an independent pole in a multipolar world, which maintains partnerships not only with China, but other non-Western centres of power as well.

As Russia and the EU continue to disassociate in terms of politics, defence, values and integration, BRICS is playing an increasingly important role in Russia's foreign policy. Unlike the EU countries, the Big Five partners share Russia's approach to many issues of global governance and development and share its commitment to create a fair multipolar order without a global hegemon, but rather collective leadership in the face of common challenges and respect for civilisational and political diversity. As Russia grows stronger as an independent global centre of power, as well as a member and a leader of Greater Eurasia, it has come to favour BRICS as the most suitable platform for global governance. That is, if Greater Eurasia appears to be a geopolitical and geo-economic home for Russia, then BRICS is the closest and most natural institution for cooperating on global issues and advancing the multipolar order at the global

level. Importantly, Moscow is not overly enthusiastic about the idea, heard from time to time in the West, to readmit Russia to the G8. As a country emphasising its non-Western identity, Russia does not see much sense in participating in Western institutions.

Thus, in the coming years, we can forget about the special relations between Russia and the EU that characterised the post-Cold War period. At best, Moscow and Brussels will be neighbours sitting on either side of a military-political, values and integration fence, or geopolitical competitors at worst. The developments in Belarus, Moldova, the South Caucasus and Ukraine show that the latter outcome is most likely. Russia will combine rivalry with the EU in the post-Soviet space in the energy sector as well, with elements of cooperation with individual EU member states and selective cooperation in the international arena, such as the Iranian nuclear deal. Indeed, given their political alienation and the divide over values, Russia has already become just another BRICS country with regard to the EU.

Vasily Kashin

Europe-China Relations at a Time of Profound Transformation

In 2020, relations between Europe and China entered a period of significant transformation that is the accumulated result of several years-long trends. The changing balance of their economic and technological capabilities, Brussels' discontent with China's policy towards some EU members, and Europe's political dependence on the United States made a revision of relations with Beijing all but inevitable.

In the past few years, China has adopted a policy of preserving and consolidating 40 years' worth of political wins in Europe. Throughout that period, relations with the EU were among the main external factors driving China's economic growth and technological modernisation.

The EU started competing with the US in the 1990s for the title of China's biggest trade partner, which it has held continuously for the past 15 years, during which time China has been the EU's biggest source of imports. As of 2019, European investment in China exceeded \$130 billion, while Chinese investment in Europe reached \$100 billion.¹

For a long time, investment cooperation with Europe was a major source of technologies, including dual-use types, managerial experience and capital for China. Initially, Europe mostly exported capital to China, but in the second half of the 2000s China started acquiring European companies and brands.

The volume of EU-China trade is staggering: EUR 560 billion in 2019 and EUR 419 billion in January through September 2020. Moreover, bilateral trade is heavily tilted in favour of China.

EU-China economic relations are beset by a similar though less serious set of problems as US-China ties, primarily trade imbalances. The EU's trade deficit with China reached EUR 163 billion in 2019. Europe is wary of the possible expansion of Chinese state-owned corporations, known as the country's national champions, as well as its numerous violations of intellectual property rights, and has been critical of China's predatory trade practices.

In 2017, the European Commission published a report² on China's trade violations, in which China is defined as "a non-market economy" that abuses the rules of free trade. The report lays out in detail Europe's complaints against Chinese industrial and trade policies, including specific features like massive subsidies for

¹ <http://www.chinamission.be/chn/gdxw/P020190620841102008924.pdf>

² https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2017/december/tradoc_156474.pdf

high-tech industries and dumping. Europe is somewhat less concerned than the United States, however, about the Chinese programmes to develop innovative industries, such as Made in China 2025. Problems in China-EU relations are discussed at annual China-EU summits held since 1998.

In short, the relationship is characterised by a very high level of economic interdependence comparable to China and the US. Europe is also a more conducive partner for China than the US given its weaker negotiating position. China works with both the EU authorities in Brussels and with national governments, conducting carefully differentiated policies and deftly managing relations with the EU in parallel with individual national governments.

China is often accused of trying to undermine European unity in the fields of foreign policy and economic relations by cultivating a group of privileged European partners. During the past few years, this group has consisted of Greece and Hungary and, to a lesser degree, Italy. Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries are members of the 17+1 initiative, which China is using to develop cooperation with European countries outside of Brussels' supervision.

For a long time, the 17+1 initiative (16+1 until Greece joined it in 2019) was a matter of concern for Western European countries, which suspected China of attempting to undermine EU unity in a bid to deal with Europe from a position of strength. However, the practical results of the initiative launched in 2012 have been quite modest.

With the exception of key partners like Hungary and Serbia, China's share in foreign direct investment in the countries that joined the initiative is barely 2 percent of the total investments in the region.³ The CEE countries do not have enough assets and projects to interest China, while also still demanding that Chinese investors comply with EU rules and norms.

³ <https://www.news18.com/news/opinion/the-171-initiative-is-china-losing-its-charm-in-central-and-eastern-europe-2891095.html>

That being said, the 17+1 initiative is important for the Eastern European countries despite the modest economic results, because it greatly strengthens their negotiating positions with Brussels by their own admission.

An example of China's successful diplomatic offensive towards industrialised EU countries is Italy, which was the first G7 country to officially join the Belt and Road Initiative in March 2019.

China's strategy of cultivating privileged relations with individual EU members and exploiting the EU's institutional weaknesses has already yielded major political returns. In 2016, Greece and Hungary managed to significantly soften the EU statement on China's legal claims in the South China Sea. In 2017, they blocked several EU statements criticising China's human rights record.⁴

The largest EU economies, led by Germany and France, as well as the European Commission have been alarmed by recent examples of China's growing influence and economic expansion (the Belgrade-Budapest railway project; the acquisition of a 51 percent stake in Greece's Piraeus port by China's COSCO Shipping; and the ongoing purchase of European brands and technological assets).

Calls for unity in relations with China have been heard from President of France Emmanuel Macron,⁵ Federal Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel,⁶ EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell⁷ and other prominent European politicians. Scholarly works and opinion pieces warning of the alarming scale and danger of China's influence are appearing with greater frequency.

⁴ <https://www.gppi.net/2018/03/15/europe-dont-let-china-divide-and-conquer>

⁵ <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Macron-warns-against-China-s-overtures-to-EU>

⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/eu-germany-merkel-china-idUSS8N2DF01L>

⁷ <https://chinaobservers.eu/power-from-within-the-benchmark-of-the-eus-unity-on-china/>

A large part of the EU's political class regards China's political and economic influence as a direct threat and is ready to undertake serious efforts to neutralise it, even if the economic price is high.

The EU has made significant progress to this end since 2019. It has adopted a new China strategy focused on maintaining a carefully coordinated policy and protecting the EU's interests and values in its dialogue with Beijing.

China is the target of the foreign direct investment screening mechanism adopted in 2019. The new common methods of screening non-EU investments do not openly name China but they require heightened scrutiny of investments made by government-owned companies. Such companies dominate many sectors of the Chinese economy. China's traditional partners in Europe were unable or unwilling to block these decisions.

In the summer and autumn of 2020, Josep Borrell laid out his own vision of a new China doctrine for Europe amid the US-China confrontation, saying that the EU has to do things "its own way." The initiative came to be dubbed the Sinatra Doctrine ("I Did It My Way"). Borrell called China an assertive, expansionist and authoritarian state that is revising the status quo in international politics while patiently and discreetly accumulating advantages so as to be able one day to present its partners with a *fait accompli*.⁸

Although the EU acknowledges the necessity of maintaining cooperation with China and pursuing a European policy towards China that is independent of the United States, it is becoming increasingly clear that Europe is unlikely to maintain neutrality in the US-China cold war.

One battlefield of the US-China war is the European high-tech market. EU countries are being forced to formulate their own approaches

⁸ <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/blog/sinatra-doctrine-building-united-european-front>

to working with China in the 5G market under heavy external pressure. China's policy is aimed at making the widest possible use of available tools to influence European policies with the goal of maintaining the foundations of cooperation, primarily in industry and technology, despite the negative political trends.

It has racked up a number of wins and losses in individual European countries, but a general picture has yet to take shape. In December 2020, facing massive pressure from the United States, Germany passed a law permitting Huawei to build a 5G network in the country under certain safety guarantees.⁹ France does not intend to renew licences granted for Huawei network equipment after 2028.¹⁰ Italy plans to reduce Huawei's share of a planned purchase of equipment for building a 5G network.¹¹ Rome is playing a leading role in Europe's policy regarding China, but Beijing has to take into account Italy's internal political turbulence and the divergent views of Italian political parties on relations with the United States and China.¹²

China's policy in Europe is focused on maintaining its position on European markets and preserving access to European technology. This is becoming increasingly important for Beijing amid its conflict with the United States. Theoretically, the EU could secure a lot of advantages from its current unique position, but its weakness, sluggishness and fragmented foreign policy leaves it vulnerable to US interference.

A crucial element of this battle in 2020 was the negotiations on the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, which could replace China's patchwork of bilateral investment agreements with 25 EU members.

China wanted to sign the agreement as soon as possible, preferably in 2020. This would have reversed the trend towards discrimination

⁹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/huawei-gets-conditional-green-light-in-germany-as-government-approves-security-bill-11608117504>

¹⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-huawei-5g-security-exclusive/exclusive-french-limits-on-huawei-5g-equipment-amount-to-de-facto-ban-by-2028-sources-idUSKCN24N26R>

¹¹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/telecom-italia-5g/telecom-italia-to-retain-nokia-as-supplier-curbing-huawei-share-of-5g-radio-network-sources-idUSL8N2J22KR>

¹² <https://thediplomat.com/2020/12/italys-china-card-in-eu-us-relations/>

against Chinese investors in Europe on political grounds, including alleged national security threats.

The decline in US-Europe cooperation during the Trump administration created an opening, and China's goal of signing the agreement before President Biden assumed office and US diplomacy stabilised looked quite reasonable.

The document was coordinated by the end of the year and China pulled out its “big guns” to close the deal, including President Xi Jinping, who discussed this issue during a videoconference with President Macron,¹³ as well as Prime Minister Li Keqiang¹⁴ and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.¹⁵ Official Chinese documents show that it was a matter of great significance for the Chinese leadership in the second half of December.

However, even the modest steps taken by the foreign policy team of the US president-elect created major obstacles to signing the agreement. Poland spoke out against it and found supporters in the European Parliament, followed by the Netherlands and Luxembourg. By December 24, France announced that it was prepared to block the investment agreement.¹⁶

However, Germany managed to overcome internal and external resistance and the document was ultimately signed. But the story of its signing shows that China's policy in Europe faces a set of problems which are well known in Russia, although Beijing was seemingly in a much better situation due to its huge economy and the absence of long-standing problems in relations with EU countries.

China will obviously have to take into account Europe's policy weakness and instability, the existence of “spoiler” countries that

¹³ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1839386.shtml

¹⁴ <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3115186/china-premier-li-keqiang-scrambles-shore-support-investment>

¹⁵ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1842143.shtml

¹⁶ <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1376328/EU-China-deal-france-uighur-muslims-eu-china-beijing-xian-jing-franck-riester-europe-ont>

prioritise relations with the US even at the expense of their own economic interests, as well as the enormous influence the US has amassed in European political, intelligence and military agencies.

The gradual anti-China shift in the EU's position on international issues of concern to China (the South China Sea, alleged human rights abuses in Xinjiang, etc.) began back in the early 2010s, that is, long before US-China differences came to a head.

The primary reason for this shift can be found in European countries' desire to strengthen their role in global politics at a time when its centre of gravity was rapidly shifting to Asia Pacific. One of the explanations offered at the time by European experts and diplomats was that they needed to put something on the table in talks with the United States.

Initially, Europe's efforts were led by Britain and France, the only countries that could project power and had at least limited military capabilities in the region.

Europe is in the process of developing military ties with Asia Pacific, including Japan and Southeast Asian nations. By the middle of the 2010s, the EU had assumed a more proactive position on freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. Several EU members called on China to respect the 2016 ruling of the international tribunal in The Hague, based on a case brought by the Philippines, regarding the boundaries of China's exclusive economic zone in the sea. After Brexit, France assumed leadership in the EU's policy in the Pacific. Germany joined it, and the two countries have released their own strategies for the Indo-Pacific region.

France is gradually increasing its military presence and activity in its own Pacific territories, while Germany intends to send its first warship there in 2021.

Europe's relative decline is reflected in its waning military – particularly naval – might. Even France has less naval capability than

South Korea, let alone China or Japan. Europe cannot seriously influence the military balance in the Pacific, but its political posture has earned the praise of US-led opponents of China, to the consternation of Beijing.

China has made its dissatisfaction clear. The joint Russian-Chinese naval exercises in the Baltic in 2017 were likely a response to increased French and British naval activities in the Western Pacific in previous years.

Military-political issues will most probably play a secondary albeit extremely negative role in the future China-Europe relations. Europe is paying more attention to Russia-China military cooperation, as the Russian factor directly affects the military situation in both Europe and Asia Pacific.

The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the traditional strengths of China's diplomacy in Europe, but it has also aggravated many problems. As the only major economy with positive GDP growth in 2020, China is becoming an even more important economic partner for the EU, where interest in Chinese investment is growing as well. Beijing marshalled its considerable industrial capacity to launch "mask diplomacy" in the spring and summer of 2020, donating and selling batches of PPE to Europe and providing large-scale pandemic assistance to its privileged partners, for example, Italy.

On the other hand, China's touting of its own achievements in curbing COVID did not go down well in some European countries and caused a diplomatic scandal with France in April 2020.¹⁷ A number of European governments joined in accusing Beijing of falsifying data and deceiving the world regarding the spread of the coronavirus in China. Polls revealed a dramatic worsening of China's image among Europeans in September-October 2020 compared to the pre-COVID period. Most respondents in Western and Northern Europe had a negative attitude to China. As many as 65 percent of respondents in France and Germany expressed negative views of China, and a majority

¹⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-china-idUSKCN21W2TC>

said their perception of China had worsened amid the pandemic. China's numbers are faring much better in Eastern Europe.¹⁸

The increasingly negative outlook on China in Europe is reminiscent of what happened with the United States in 2016-2018. There has been a rise in anti-China election slogans and reduced support for measures to liberalise trade and economic cooperation with Beijing. Overall, the ground is being laid for a long-term decline in relations. A more consistent and determined US policy in Europe promises to accelerate these anti-China trends, which Beijing will find extremely difficult to counter by economic means alone.

Alexey Kupriyanov, Nivedita Kapoor

Europe & India: From 'Loveless Arranged Marriage' to Uncertain Future

Introduction

From the British colonial legacy of India that defined its links to Europe in the pre-1947 era to the present day engagement with the supranational European Union (EU), the relationship has undergone a vast change. The colonial history, which had led to deep economic ties to the British Empire, underwent a change as the newly independent country looked to other partners to rebuild its weak economy. The subsequent years of the Cold War were characterized by a closer relationship with the Soviet Union. The presence of European countries (except the UK)

¹⁸ https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/european_public_opinion_on_china_in_the_age_of_covid-19.pdf

in Indian markets was relatively small compared to the USSR, the USA and Japan, and vice versa. In addition, Europe as a whole did not act as a separate actor in the Indian Ocean region during the Cold War, although British and French ships and contingents were present in the region due to the fact that Britain and France retained their bases and possessions there. So European-Indian relations developed very weakly and had no incentive to develop faster.

But this did not prevent New Delhi from establishing diplomatic relations with the European Economic Community as early as 1962 and seeking to promote trade and economic ties. The situation changed after the geopolitical changes in 1991, when the Cold War ended and the Indian economy opened up for investment. This period saw a cooperation agreement signed between the two sides in 1994 that led to expansion of the ties beyond trade and economic to include political dialogues and annual ministerial meetings.¹⁹ Europe began to be seen as one of the promising trade and financial partners and as a result, India's interest in it grew sharply.

Over the years, the focus of the relationship for India has been on building stronger trade and investment ties, enhancing its "strategic autonomy" based on "sovereign equality."²⁰ The first India-EU summit was held in 2000 and the relationship was upgraded to Strategic Partnership in 2004. This was followed by a Joint Action Plan next year, which was updated in 2008. Starting from 2000, twelve annual summits were held regularly, a process that was derailed due to the arrest in India of two Italian marines for killing two fishermen off India's coast in 2012.

Italy's objections were pacified only in 2016 when India decided to agree to international arbitration tribunal over the issue, paving the way for the visit of PM Narendra Modi to Brussels for the 13th India-EU summit. The two sides have meanwhile failed to conclude the Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA), the talks for which stalled in 2013.

¹⁹ https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India_EU_Relation2020.pdf

²⁰ http://www.asianperceptions.fu-berlin.de/system/files/private/wp1014-india-eu-strategic-partnership_0.pdf

After the fourteenth summit in 2017, there was again a gap in holding the 15th summit which was eventually held online in July 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Analysts have argued that recent years have seen an uptick in the relationship with “more contact and content²¹” and that the relations are “experiencing a revival”²² after the difficult period of 2012-16. In 2018, the EU strategy for India was released followed by the 2020 summit, which adopted the Strategic Partnership Roadmap to 2025, aiming to promote stronger relations.

The 2020 summit

The year kicked off with EU High Representative Josep Borrell making his “first major policy speech”²³ in New Delhi in January followed by the visit of Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar to Brussels in preparation for the upcoming summit. However, events stemming out of the coronavirus pandemic meant that the summit had to be held online. The conclusion of the BTIA remained elusive with no time-frame²⁴ being set for it. The virtual summit though has led to setting up of a ministerial level dialogue to break the deadlock and advance talks on the matter.

The talks have been stalled since 2013, with the 2017 summit only noting “the ongoing efforts of both sides to re-engage actively towards timely re-launching negotiations”²⁵ for the BTIA. The disagreements on issues like tariffs on certain imports from EU as well as liberalization of visa provisions for skilled Indian workers have made negotiations difficult. The two sides also differ on other issues including agriculture exports standards, status of India as a data-secure country and intellectual property rights.²⁶

²¹ http://www.asianperceptions.fu-berlin.de/system/files/private/wp1014-india-eu-strategic-partnership_0.pdf

²² <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-and-major-powers-the-european-union-54234/>

²³ <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-eu-summit-2020-partners-for-a-21st-century-rules-based-order/>

²⁴ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/at-india-eu-summit-trade-deal-remains-elusive/story-SKQruUnonqupd8O91vc8QJ.html>

²⁵ <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29011/India%20and%20EU%20Joint%20Statement%20during%20the%20IndiaEU%20Summit%20New%20Delhi%20October%202017>

²⁶ https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR145_WDIT.pdf

The 2020 joint statement contained important declarations on upgrading dialogue on technology – including 5G and artificial intelligence, promoting a rules-based approach to connectivity, launching a dialogue on maritime security and underlining the need to preserve stability in the Indian Ocean. Compared to the Agenda for Action 2020 document, the 2025 roadmap also contains some welcome additions. These include aims to establish a maritime security dialogue replacing the counter-piracy dialogue, strengthening military-to-military relations and exchanges and deepening the existing cooperation between Indian Navy at European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) ATALANTA in the area of counter-piracy that have the potential to strengthen security cooperation between the two entities.

Other notable additions have been cooperation on connectivity with third countries including in the Indo-Pacific region, working group for space collaboration, artificial intelligence, ocean governance and cooperating to maintain peace, stability, safety and security, especially in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific.²⁷ Several of these themes had also formed part of the 2018 EU strategy document on India. Another welcome development has been the signing of India-EURATOM Agreement on research and development cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the “first time” EU has signed such an agreement with a “non-NPT member.”²⁸

The trajectory of India-Europe relations until 2020

The relationship between India and Europe has proceeded along two distinct paths – one related to its engagement with the EU and the other related to its bilateral engagement with EU-member states, with the leading partners being France, Germany and UK. The India-EU ties have been guided along based on the strategic partnership agreement

²⁷ https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/32828/IndiaEU_Strategic_Partnership_A_Roadmap_to_2025

²⁸ https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=1&ls_id=5263&lid=3712#_ednref3

signed in 2004 which states that the partnership is based on common values in the form of democratic principles, the rule of law, human rights, the pursuit of peace and stability. The agreement calls for cooperation on four fronts – multilateral engagement at the international level, economic ties, development of India and cultural and people-to-people contacts – the realization of which has been mixed²⁹.

It must be noted that EU as a whole is India's largest trade partner with bilateral trade in 2018–19 at \$115.6 billion. For its part, India was the ninth largest trading partner for the EU in 2018. In 2019, it was the EU's tenth largest trading partner with a share of 1.9 percent of its trade. In comparison, USA, China and the UK accounted for 15.2, 13.8, 12.6 percent of EU trade respectively.³⁰ As per Government of India statistics, India is the “fourth largest service exporter to the EU and the sixth largest destination for service exports from the EU.”³¹

With cumulative foreign investment from EU to India touching \$91 billion; it is one of the largest sources of FDI for the developing country³². However, this figure lags considerably behind EU investments in countries like China and Brazil.³³ Currently, 6,000 European companies with branches in India provide 1.7 million direct jobs and another 5 million jobs in related industries. Indian investments in the EU have exceeded EUR 50 billion since 2000. The EU is also an important partner in technology and innovation.

The EU claims to be an independent centre of power and in this regard, Europe is seen as a promising trade, economic and political partner for the future, one of the centers of power in the polycentric world, with which India has the same interests and moral values. On top of that, India sees Brexit as an opportunity: after Britain leaves the EU,

²⁹ <https://hal-sciencespo.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01065630/document>

³⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/india/>

³¹ https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India_EU_Relation2020.pdf

³² <https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/32835/Transcript+of+Virtual+Special+Media+Briefing+on+IndiaEU+Summit+by+Secretary+West+July+15+2020>

³³ <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/india/>

the European Union is likely to show renewed interest in finding trading partners and strengthening ties with existing ones.

In the area of security, issues of anti-piracy in Indian Ocean, cyber-security, drugs and arms trafficking, counter-terrorism have been considered important for improving coordination. There have even been calls for dealing with “common security interests” in areas like “crisis management, peacekeeping and peace-building.”³⁴

The development of ties has also been shaped by joint statements, the 2005 Joint Action Plan and its 2008 revised version, the EU-India Agenda for Action Plan-2020 and most recently the 2025 Roadmap. The EU’s strategy document for India in 2018 is also important in this regard.

The joint statements over the years have noted an exhaustive list of areas for existing and potential coordination between the two sides including trade cooperation, investment, infrastructure, climate change, multilateral engagement, rules-based international order, safeguarding of global commons, counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, maritime security in Indian Ocean and beyond as well as a host of regional and global issues. But these plans have not always translated into concrete projects and the relationship has lacked depth.³⁵

Various scholars have noted that the joint action plans are more declarative in nature and commit both sides to dialogue “rather than to significant policy measures.”³⁶ They are seen as being “short on specifics and deliverables.”³⁷ This has been attributed to a series of factors including diverging priorities on the domestic front for each party and only a “partial overlap”³⁸ in the gains that the two partners think will accrue to them from the relationship. Also, their partnership has been plagued by their divergent world-views, “different geo-political milieus”

³⁴ https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/jc_elements_for_an_eu_strategy_on_india_-_final_adopted.pdf

³⁵ <https://www.orfonline.org/research/eu-india-relations-time-to-chart-a-new-course/>

³⁶ http://www.asianperceptions.fu-berlin.de/system/files/private/wp1014-india-eu-strategic-partnership_0.pdf

³⁷ <https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/05/10/india-and-europe-in-multipolar-world-pub-48038>

³⁸ <https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/05/10/india-and-europe-in-multipolar-world-pub-48038>

and priorities.³⁹ Bernd von Münchow-Pohl, a European policy expert on India, call this strategic partnership a “loveless arranged marriage.”⁴⁰

The gaps in annual summits in the past years, the stalling of the trade agreement talks, slow pace of development of ties and the backlog created means that India has a lot of “catching-up”⁴¹ to do when it comes to ties with Europe. This was particularly evident after the 2012-16 period when the Italian marines issue led to the stalling of bilateral summits and led to sense that the India-EU relationship was “under-performing.”⁴²

Since 2016, efforts have been undertaken to rectify this situation through several high-level visits. It has also been argued that the 2018 policy document released by the EU marks a shift in its policy towards India through the acknowledgement of the important geopolitical role India plays in Asia⁴³ and argues that a strong partnership with India is “key” towards establishing a balanced policy towards Asia as a whole.⁴⁴ But as of now, it has not led to a noticeable breakthrough in relations – in part because of a lack of clearly defined priority areas.

Assessment of the Strategic Partnership

As noted above, scholars have found a distinct difference in the trajectory of development of India’s ties with the EU and its bilateral ties with key partners like France, Germany and the UK; with the former playing a second fiddle⁴⁵ to the latter. In the case of EU, the

³⁹ http://www.asianperceptions.fu-berlin.de/system/files/private/wp1014-india-eu-strategic-partnership_0.pdf

⁴⁰ https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_what_india_thinks_of_europe7167

⁴¹ <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/narendra-modi-ram-nath-kovind-india-foreign-policy-asean-nations-5349432/>

⁴² <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/23-european-union-india-solana.pdf>

⁴³ https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/mohan_prospect_new_ue_2019.pdf

⁴⁴ https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/jc_elements_for_an_eu_strategy_on_india_-_final_adopted.pdf

⁴⁵ <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-eu-summit-2020-partners-for-a-21st-century-rules-based-order/>

first decade of the 21st century focused on the economic partnership where the sector formed the “core” of the India-EU relationship but the latter was rarely identified as a “factor in India’s strategic affairs.”⁴⁶ In terms of both strategic and diplomatic objectives, the relationship has remained “bogged down.”⁴⁷ The same has also been noticed in the case of EU’s policy towards New Delhi, which led to calls for improving the state of political and security relations that lag significantly behind trade and economic ties.

In this regard, China has emerged as a key point wherein India is dealing with a rising power on its borders, further highlighted by the events on the eastern front. India is looking to manage China through its network of partners but until recently, EU has not played a significant security role in East Asia. Already, it has been a long-standing grievance in India that the EU does not share the assessment of India regarding threat from Pakistan and China.⁴⁸ For the EU, China remains a key trade and investment partner and it remains geographically distant from the events.

This has led to complaints about lack of a “coherent European strategy for Asia”⁴⁹ and the Indo-Pacific being a “blind-spot”⁵⁰ in EU’s strategy. Other experts also note that given that the Indo-Pacific is not an area of “core competence”⁵¹ for Europe as a whole, it will be difficult for the Union to present a comprehensive policy on the matter. Given that some EU members are now part of BRI and the 17+1 dialogue with Central and Eastern Europe has been established, question regarding whether the EU will be able to take a position on China⁵² that would satisfy Indian concerns remains a moot point.

⁴⁶ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/002088170904500403>

⁴⁷ <https://hal-sciencespo.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01065630/document>

⁴⁸ <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/India-EU-defence-paper.pdf>

⁴⁹ https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR145_WDIT.pdf

⁵⁰ https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/mohan_prospect_new_ue_2019.pdf

⁵¹ <https://carnegieindia.org/2020/05/28/coronavirus-and-future-of-india-eu-relations-event-7339>

⁵² <https://carnegieindia.org/2020/05/28/coronavirus-and-future-of-india-eu-relations-event-7339>

There have been some undercurrents of change in the 2019 strategic outlook on China that declares a shift in “balance of challenges and opportunities presented by China” as a result of its rapid development; presenting the Asian power as an “economic competitor” as well as “a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance.”⁵³ The outlook also notes the security issues presented to the EU as a result of China’s rising military capacity and sets out the need for a new framework for screening FDI and securing 5G networks. While it will be interesting to see how this translates into policy action on the ground, it is unlikely that the EU will openly take sides in the new Cold War and cannot act as a counterbalance to Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean, although it partially fulfils this role thanks to its economic presence in the Eastern Africa.

This is because as scholars note, on security related issues, the EU as a grouping has “extremely limited competencies” and member-states have differing opinions with regard to China. Until recently, there has been limited cooperation of Indian navy with the EU’s ATALANTA operation that seeks to counter piracy in the Gulf of Aden. This is in contrast to growing bilateral engagements with the navies of France, UK, Spain and Italy through joint exercises while in contrast an EU level engagement in the area has not been noticed.⁵⁴ A factor in this has been that on security issues when it comes to putting up resources, EU countries want to retain sovereignty.⁵⁵

This has resulted in diversified defence cooperation of India with its strategic partners in the region – France, UK and Germany – which includes joint exercises, arms purchases and regular security dialogues. India has preferred to develop bilateral security ties with EU members that have clear interests in the Indian Ocean region (France, Germany). This is due both to the understanding that the EU as a whole has little interest in strengthening its military

⁵³ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>

⁵⁴ <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/eu-india-partnership-time-go-strategic>

⁵⁵ <https://carnegieindia.org/2020/05/28/coronavirus-and-future-of-india-eu-relations-event-7339>

presence in the region (in connection with which India does not perceive it as a serious player in the security sphere), and to the general disappointment in the excessive bureaucracy of the EU and unwillingness to accept India as a dynamic and equal partner. The complaints of representatives of Indian elites, cited by the French scientist François Godement, are indicative wherein the perception looms that “there is no commitment from the top in Europe on cooperation with India. All it brings to India are complaints about climate change and human rights”.⁵⁶ While the US is present as a security guarantor in East Asia, making it an important partner for India, it is unclear as to how the EU can help India deal with its key security challenges⁵⁷ to make this dimension truly strategic in nature.

Their multilateral cooperation too has remained limited due to divergence in values and the goals the two sides seek to achieve via these institutions. The EU does not want to lose the influence it has acquired in multilateral institutions⁵⁸ while emerging powers like India want reforms to reflect the changes in the international system in the post-Cold War period. Other concerns have been related to issues of administrative reform in Kashmir and amendments to the citizenship law. These actions were criticized within the EU for human rights violations, which did not prevent a group of European right-wing parliamentarians from visiting Kashmir. An official invitation to send a delegation to Kashmir, however, was rejected by the European Parliament in January 2020.

In February 2020, EU Ambassador to India Ugo Astuto and several other European envoys⁵⁹ formed part of a 25-member delegation that visited Kashmir. The members called for restoration of internet services and noted the continued detention of political leaders, calling for an end

⁵⁶ https://www.ecfr.eu/what_does_india_think

⁵⁷ http://www.asianperceptions.fu-berlin.de/system/files/private/wp1014-india-eu-strategic-partnership_0.pdf

⁵⁸ <https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/05/10/india-and-europe-in-multipolar-world-pub-48038>

⁵⁹ <https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/32389/Visit+of+Foreign+Heads+of+Mission+to+Jammu+amp+Kashmir>

to “restrictions” while acknowledging the “serious security concerns.”⁶⁰ After the visit, the EU spokesperson also noted that India had “taken positive steps to restore normalcy.”⁶¹ This demonstration of commitment to values among politicians, along with the drive to grow business among economists, is likely to continue in the future. In addition, the EU is divided on one of the key issues for India: UN reform. If Germany, along with India, Japan and Brazil, is part of the G4, then Italy and Spain are part of the Uniting for Reform, effectively blocking the G4 proposals.

These issues have revealed a distinct gap between ambitions and capabilities of the EU when it comes to dealing with issues of prime importance to India. While experts have noted the absence of an external threat⁶² to drive the relationship forward, this has also resulted in furtherance of the bilateral track of India’s engagement with individual EU states. The Indian elites would like a faster development of trade relations (in particular, the conclusion of an FTA) and a radical change in the attitude towards India on the part of the European elites.

The cultural and people-to-people links remain one of the weakest links in cooperation. With the withdrawal of Great Britain from the EU, which was home to 1.76 million immigrants from India, the Indian diaspora in the European Union has significantly decreased, and at the same time, already weak social ties have diminished. At the moment, the Indian diaspora in the EU countries does not reach even a million (top three: Italy – 203,052, Germany – 185,085, France – 109,000). Also, while most of the Indian diaspora is concentrated in the UK, it does not enjoy significant political influence, unlike their US counterparts.

Back in 2012, experts and politicians noted that the populations of Europe and India have very little mutual interest. India in the eyes of Europeans is a colourful tourist destination, inhabited by a huge number of poor people and a number of talented programmers. For

⁶⁰ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/eu-for-swift-end-to-all-curbs-in-kashmir/article30823016.ece>

⁶¹ <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/eu-says-india-has-taken-steps-to-restore-normalcy-in-kashmir-calls-for-swift-withdrawal-of-remaining-curbs-11581690269568.html>

⁶² <https://carnegieindia.org/2020/05/28/coronavirus-and-future-of-india-eu-relations-event-7339>

Indians, Europe is a place where you can enjoy life if you get rich, where quality products are made and where many Bollywood films are set. Most Indians do not perceive Europe as a separate actor, but rather as the geographical sum of a number of nations. Most Indians do not know and are not interested in Europe, while Europe still perceives India through the prism of orientalism in the style of the 19th century, and according to the results of polls in a number of countries, negative attitudes towards India outweigh positive ones.

Conclusion

In summary, we can say that India and Europe continue to gradually develop ties, considering each other at the official level as strategic partners. Broadly, the achievements of the India-EU relationship have been “modest”⁶³ and the progress made in recent years leaves a lot to be desired.

The two sides need to ramp up ties not just in the economic domain through finalization of BTIA but also on political and security issues. They have a stake in stability in Central Asia, West Asia, Africa and the Indian Ocean.⁶⁴ Until now, the EU’s excessive bureaucracy, its looseness, and lack of common understanding of the strategic need to rapidly develop ties with India prevent India and the European Union from furthering the strategic partnership. India too needs to invest in its efforts to deal with the EU institutions and its procedures instead of dismissing them.⁶⁵ It must be recognized that striking unity in a 27-member group will be difficult and “finding common ground on global issues” will pose a “challenge”⁶⁶ to both India and EU.

However, the impact of the discourse of an increasingly aggressive China on Indian and European policy making has the potential to create synergies between the two sides and push them to

⁶³ <https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/05/10/india-and-europe-in-multipolar-world-pub-48038>

⁶⁴ https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/jc_elements_for_an_eu_strategy_on_india_-_final_adopted.pdf

⁶⁵ http://www.asianperceptions.fu-berlin.de/system/files/private/wp1014-india-eu-strategic-partnership_0.pdf

⁶⁶ https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR145_WDIT.pdf

overcome the obstacles that have held back the relationship – both in the economic and strategic domains. In this regard, it will be important for both sides to implement their goals and objectives laid down in the Roadmap to 2025 so as to strengthen their strategic partnership in a changing world order and deal with the challenges of the post-pandemic international system.

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Europe: The View from Brazil

Today, Latin American passions not only dominate Brazil's domestic political agenda but also affect the tropical giant's relations with the rest of the world, including Europe. In the past few decades, the dialogue of the partners on opposite sides of the Atlantic has gone from close strategic partnership to traded insults and estrangement.

Brazil's relations with Europe are largely the product of its history of independence, which is different from the record of other Latin American states. In the early 19th century, it was proclaimed part of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves, making it essentially equal to Portugal, the metropole, and so avoided an armed struggle for independence. Under this new form of rule, and with its economy taking off, Brazil began to assert its rights to regional domination, which was most vividly expressed in its foreign policy doctrine of the 19th century, pioneered by “the father of Brazilian diplomacy,” Baron of Rio Branco. A self-sufficient foreign policy and independence from conventional power centres (including Europe) may be considered traditional attributes of Latin America's biggest and most economically advanced country. It was manifested during the rule of many great leaders of the 20th and 21st centuries, particularly President Getulio Vargas.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Boris Martynov. Brazil in the BRICS format // Svobodnaya Mysl journal, No. 11-12, 2012, pp. 19–28.

The main impetus for the improvement of relations between Brazil and Europe came in the 1980s when an increasingly powerful European Economic Community (EEC) designated Latin America a priority external partner. Spain and Portugal, revitalized by their accession to the EEC in 1986, also played a positive role.⁶⁸ To promote relations with former colonies that were still close to them culturally and socially, the Iberian countries tried to establish an Iberian-American community to further their political and economic partnership. In response to the neoliberal reforms and large-scale privatisation adopted by some Latin American states, including Brazil, in the late 1980s, Spanish businesses began actively expanding in the region and dominating promising markets.

Brazil, the largest country in the region, was of particular interest to Europe after the end of military rule in 1985 when Brazil returned to the path of democratic development. That same year, the EEC established official relations with Brazil, and opened an office in Brasilia. This was followed by the signing of the first framework cooperation agreement and the start of regular consultations.

In the past, Brazilian leaders perceived Europe primarily as a source of investment, technology and a promising market for agricultural exports. Relations flourished during the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso in 1995–2002. Brazil became a key European ally, although it remained a junior partner. The range of cooperation was expanded to include human rights, environmental protection, social inequality and crime prevention, which were of great importance to the Europeans. This period probably represents the high watermark in the relationship. European leaders declared Brazil their main partner in Latin America, and the Brazilian president enjoyed unprecedented prestige in the Old World.⁶⁹ Europe became the main investor in the economy of Brazil,⁷⁰ and trade grew at an accelerated rate.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Natalya Chernyshova. Brazil's relations with the EU countries // *Chelovek. Obshchestvo. Upravleniye*. No. 1, 2006, pp. 138-146.

⁶⁹ *O Estado de São Paulo*. 2000. 06 junho.

⁷⁰ CEPAL. *La Inversión Extranjera 2004*. Santiago de Chile, 2005. p.74.

⁷¹ The author's calculations are based on UN Comtrade data.

The 2000s saw the growth of all developing economies, including Brazil, giving them the confidence to revise their position in the world and engage with Western countries as equals. As part of Brazil's Left Turn, its new leaders – Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (2003–2011) and Dilma Rousseff (2011–2016) – changed the country's foreign policy priorities. In a break with its past European orientation, Brazil opted for South-to-South cooperation and consolidated its leadership in the developing world. It balanced between traditional US dominance and EU influence by concluding alternative strategic and tactical unions with the developing nations. This course reached its peak with Brazil's accession to BRICS and the start of its close political and economic alliance with China that gradually overtook the US and then the EU as its key trade partner.

In the meantime, the rise of Brazil and the potential of its enormous domestic market made it a desirable partner for the Europeans. Brazil was designated a "strategic partner" in 2007 and a preferential trade agreement was signed. Some European countries wanted to seize the growing opportunities for cooperation. During the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy, France became Brazil's strategic partner in the defence industry despite the ideological differences between their governments.

Seeking to engage with Europe as equals, Brazil demanded recognition of its objective economic interests during the complicated negotiations between MERCOSUR and the EU, which started back in 1995. Due to the inflexible positions staked out by both sides, the talks proceeded with difficulty and were repeatedly interrupted by the reluctance of the European countries to discuss agricultural subsidies.⁷² Brazil began to regard its differences with the EU and other industrialised countries (the US and Japan) as a deliberate attempt to infringe on the rights of developing nations on a global scale and raised these problems at the WTO. Chaffing in its role as junior partner, Brazil found in the G20 a new platform for advancing its global ambitions, positioning itself as an informal leader capable of uniting the countries of the Global South.

⁷² Boris Martynov // Svobodnaya mysl. No. 1, pp. 19–34.

The large-scale economic and later political crisis that consumed the tropical giant after 2015 signified a new era in its relations with the EU. In one of his first speeches Jose Serra, the first foreign minister during the presidency of Michel Temer (2016–2018), declared Brazil's return to its traditional foreign policy, which consisted of a Western orientation and “liberal realism” in its balancing of values and interests.⁷³ In effect, this was an attempt to partially return to the system of relations that existed under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. That said, the new right-wing government could not completely abandon the foreign policy realism inherited from its left-wing predecessors. BRICS became a major asset for advancing national interests, and China became a trade and investment partner comparable to Europe despite its ideological differences with Brazil.

A radical, dramatic turn occurred with the election of right-wing radical Jair Bolsonaro in 2019. Even during his campaign, he made no attempt to conceal that his team would consider not just the US, but specifically the Donald Trump administration, as its main partner. Weakened by *Brexit*, riven by internal disputes and suffering undeniable foreign policy failures, for instance, during the Venezuelan crisis, the European Union had been devalued in the eyes of the tough and crude Bolsonaro who prized power above all else. The conservative firebrand also vehemently opposes liberal European policies on family values and the rights of sexual minorities.

As distinct from his predecessors Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Michel Temer, Bolsonaro is interested in Europe not because of its values but in a narrow pragmatic sense – as a source of investment and technology and a promising market in case MERCOSUR and the EU were to conclude an agreement. During his election campaign, Bolsonaro welcomed a deal, threatening Brazil's MERCOSUR partners that it would withdraw from the Customs Union and sign a separate treaty with the Europeans if the talks made no progress. The agreement was ultimately signed in June 2019 although credit for this achievement goes not to

⁷³Gratius S. Brazil and the European Union: from liberal inter-regionalism to realist bilateralism // Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional. No. 61 (1), 2018, p. 5.

the newly elected government but to its predecessors in the Temer administration.

However, the breakthrough in the trade deal did not herald a period of closer relations between the two regions, but just the opposite. During Bolsonaro's campaign, the Europeans closely followed the right-wing radical's statements on potentially withdrawing Brazil from the Paris Agreement on climate. European experts had no illusions about engaging in constructive dialogue with the new leader. As early as December 2018, the outlines of the future confrontation between Jair Bolsonaro and Emmanuel Macron became clear after the French leader promised not to ratify the trade deal if Brazil withdrew from the Paris Agreement.⁷⁴

The differences between the Brazilian leadership and the Europeans (both the EU and individual states) only grew worse after that. The fires in the Amazon rainforest in the summer of 2019 triggered a high-profile diplomatic scandal between Brazil and France. By suggesting mechanisms of international verification and aid in restoring forests, Macron inadvertently messed with Brazil's sovereignty over the Amazon rainforest, the most sensitive issue for the Brazilian military. It looms so large that all key national security documents call for safeguarding this sovereignty. The issue is much more important for the Brazilian elite than any environmental problems, and Bolsonaro has flatly rejected any accusations of environmental damage, calling Europe an "environmental sect."⁷⁵ The scandal became unseemly when Jair Bolsonaro and his sons directed vulgar insults at Macron's wife Brigitte.

Differences in their approaches to the coronavirus pandemic added more fuel to the fire. The policy of the Brazilian leader, who initially denied that COVID-19 was even a problem, and came to

⁷⁴ <https://www.euractiv.com/section/climate-environment/news/macron-threatens-to-scupper-eu-south-america-trade-deal-over-climate/>

⁷⁵ <https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/south-america/bolsonaro-calls-europe-an-environmental-sect.html>

advocate minimal public health restrictions, met with confusion not only inside the country but also among Europeans who value life over the economy. Bolsonaro's image in Europe took a major hit but he seems to care less and less. France's refusal to ratify the EU-MERCOSUR agreement in September 2020, which was more a product of the influence of the French farmers' lobby than the personal insults traded by the leaders, was extremely disappointing to Brazil and destroyed one of the few bridges that linked the countries.

The focus of Brazilian foreign policy is increasingly shifting to the Brazil-US-China triangle, which is the most debated and politically divisive issue in Brazil. Interestingly, the most prominent think tanks in the field of international relations (Getulio Vargas Fund, the Brazilian Centre for International Relations, the Institute of Applied Economic Research and the Institute of Rio Branco, to name a few) generally disagree with the government's foreign policy strategy. However, currently they are primarily focused on analysing the North American and Chinese tracks of Brazil's foreign policy, whereas before they were looking at Europe. Now the Old World features in the expert discourse in the context of asymmetrical relations, graphically illustrated by the failure of the trade deal. Experts are discussing various new ways to configure the dialogue with the EU, with an emphasis on a bilateral approach and horizontal dialogue.⁷⁶

Having placed his bets on a Trump second term and antagonised Beijing over the vaccine and other issues, Bolsonaro may fall victim to his own unbalanced and excessively personalised policies. Democrat Joseph Biden is more closely aligned with the European positions on protecting the Amazon rainforest and defeating the pandemic. His victory will compel Itamarati⁷⁷ to seek new footholds in its foreign policy strategy, which could have the effect of helping to restore Europe as a key partner.

⁷⁶ Froio L.R., Medeiros M.A. Analysing the Asymmetry in Decentralised International Co-operation: The Case of Brazil/Europe Sub-national Relations // *Contexto Internacional*. Vol. 42(2) May/Aug 2020, p. 304.

⁷⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil – *Ed.note*.

Alexandra Arkhangelskaya

A New Dawn? South Africa-EU Relations

Introduction

Considered a leader in its region, South Africa is also a significant player in the international political arena. This has been notable with the country's third stint as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and President Ramaphosa's chairmanship of the African Union (AU), which ended on February 6, 2021. Under the previous administration of President Jacob Zuma, the main characteristic element of South Africa's foreign policy was arguably its entry into the BRIC, which turned this association into BRICS, leading to a feeling amongst European capitals that the relationship with South Africa had become rather lukewarm, especially in the political realm.

Africa is becoming particularly important in the midst of the growing economic and ecological challenges in the world, and the potential the continent continues to have as an area of growth and development. Africa is thus becoming an even more attractive zone of strategic interests for old and emerging power poles as countries such as India, China, South Korea, Turkey, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, and the United States seek varying ways to grow their influence on the continent.

However, over the past decade, South Africa has largely not been able to meet its stated goals and even seen some of its influence in Africa and abroad diminishing as new actors emerge with varying histories and development models. The country had arguably also become preoccupied by its own domestic challenges, ceding ground

to other actors on the continent. It is thus acknowledged that whilst taking up important positions, its influence on the continent and beyond was in relative decline. This is a position that the current administration is seeking to reverse, beginning with the process of rebuilding institutions and their credibility at home. In doing that, the country is also seeking to regain its position on the international landscape under the leadership of President Ramaphosa, who has ushered in what is being referred to as a “new dawn”.

The following article reviews the importance of South Africa’s relationship with Europe, which has been complicated by the onset of Brexit. Indeed in referring to Europe, the article mainly has the EU and the soon to exit United Kingdom. It is arguable that political relations have lagged behind the economic and social aspects of the relationship, although these are improving under the current administration, a sentiment largely acknowledged across the European Embassies in South Africa. Differences have generally arisen over South Africa’s approach to some of its engagements on the African continent and its broader South-South cooperation posture, but the economic relations have remained of great importance as most of the country’s foreign direct investment (FDI) continues to come from the EU countries.

Contemporary dynamics of SA-EU relations

While China is now South Africa’s largest trading partner as a nation state, the EU remains ahead as a region. Significantly, much of the trade between South Africa and the EU is not centred on the extraction of raw materials, but displays a relatively diversified composition while also linked to South Africa’s manufacturing industry. The former EU head of delegation in South Africa, Roeland van de Geer,⁷⁸ in a speech at UNISA in 2014, emphasised that roughly 50% of South Africa’s exports

⁷⁸ Van de Geer, R. *South Africa and the European Union: 1994 – 2014 Trends, developments and a perspective on the future*, University of South Africa, Pretoria, Speech as Head of the Delegation of the European Union to South Africa, 2014

into the EU were manufactured goods and thus central in meeting South Africa's challenge of job creation.

Yet despite these healthy economic factors, political relations have been clouded by a number of open disagreements over the course of the partnership. This has also been complicated by Brexit. Following the conclusion of an agreement by members of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) + Mozambique with the UK to continue the terms of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the EU and SACU+Mozambique, it can be argued that this was an important commitment towards ensuring stability beyond Brexit. However, the manner in which the UK leaves the EU will still have important ramifications for its relations with South Africa and the African continent.

A significant foreign policy divergence between South Africa and its European counterparts has been over the handling of the socio-political crisis, which engulfed Zimbabwe following successive disputed elections and a chaotic land redistribution process. Disagreements displayed here would expose important foreign policy divergences in the relationship between South Africa and Europe. South Africa's 2016 move to withdraw from the International Criminal Court (ICC) would also lead to political divergences between South Africa and the EU despite healthy relations in a variety of sectors such as trade and investment, health, education, science and technology. This however remains unimplemented, and the country remains a member of the ICC.

South Africa's foreign policy interests with the EU are thus as much about attracting important FDI into South Africa as they are about ensuring that the EU supports Africa's Pan-African institutions such as the African Union (AU) and regional economic communities such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Given the importance of the AU Commission in the overall architecture of the African Union, it is significant that the EU contributes roughly

80% of the budget for the AU Commission.⁷⁹ This is a high figure and highlights that whatever South Africa hopes to achieve in pursuing its African Agenda, it will have to ensure that it maintains close political dialogue with the EU. The European Commission alone had contributed approximately \$1.9 billion to the AU between 2004 and 2015. In the year 2015 alone, contributions by the European Commission to the African Union Commission amounted to \$380 million.⁸⁰ In the absence of African countries contributing more to the funding of their own institutions, South Africa will thus have to work closely with the EU on various matters affecting Pan-African institutions.

Managing trade and investment relations

While trade and investment relations have remained healthy, they have declined as a percentage of South Africa's trade, a process accelerated by the global financial crisis of 2008, which reduced overall demand for South Africa's products in markets such as Europe. Growing intra-Africa trade has thus been a central part of South Africa's trade strategy, and is reflected in the fact that over the past decade "SA's non-mineral exports to Sub-Saharan Africa grew from 19% to almost 29%, overtaking exports to the European Union (down from 41% to 28%)."

In terms of South Africa's exports to Europe, Germany, the largest economy in Europe, is the leading destination of South Africa's products, followed by the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy (table 1). What is significant here is that as a percentage of South Africa's overall exports, Europe continued to decline, even as it remains an important trade destination. South Africa has sought to minimize the impact of the economic slump in Europe, and thus to consolidate its exports in this

⁷⁹ European Commission. 'African Union Commission and European Commission meet to address shared EU-Africa challenges', Press Release, Brussels, 4 April, 2016.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*

TABLE 1. SOUTH AFRICAN EXPORTS TO EUROPE

Country	Exports (R Millions)								Ranking		
	Name	Aug-15	Aug-16	Jan-Aug 2016	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2015	2016
GERMANY		5969	6429	56010	85750	97313	65348	49436	67737	1	1
UNITED KINGDOM		3152	3688	32367	57364	70940	49490	37612	41854	2	2
BELGIUM		2725	2372	21805	30422	39306	28680	26703	29355	3	3
NETHERLANDS		2342	3348	18815	42819	62387	47886	33114	25321	4	4
ITALY		1100	1519	10842	25806	29098	16161	11515	13913	6	5
SWITZERLAND		1464	1732	9173	44227	37787	35798	17076	17168	5	6
SPAIN		1379	1140	7866	16865	19679	12065	10510	11360	7	7
FRANCE		1036	991	6999	12418	17057	13542	9462	9105	8	8
RUSSIAN FEDERATION		361	404	2877	4430	8954	5990	3973	3699	9	9
SWEDEN		224	174	1711	4411	4228	3805	2380	2152	10	10

region. The Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement (TDCA), a regional trade agreement signed in 1999, and implemented in 2000, has largely regulated trade between South Africa and Europe. Under the agreement, the EU would liberalise 95 per cent of its duties on products from South Africa, while South Africa would liberalise 86 per cent of its duties on EU products by 2012. In 2008, members of the European Free Trade Area, namely Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland also concluded a free trade agreement with members of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), thus also bringing them in line with the TDCA (Vickers 2014: 64–65).

This was followed by the conclusion of the SADC-EU Economic Partnership Agreement in 2014, which further updated the TDCA. Under this new trade regime, South African exporters have claimed greater access into the EU and that the EPA provides more scope for domestic industrial policies and support for regional integration. Protection for geographical indicators in the EU was also seen as an important success for exporters, meaning that names of origin such as “Rooibos”, “Honeybush”, and “Karoo Lamb” will be protected, while South Africa also recognises certain European food products and an array of European wines (Vickers 2017: 65). While the EU remains ahead of other countries and regions in terms of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into South Africa, it is important to be cognizant of the relative ascendance of fast growing regions such as Africa and Asia. These regions are important in efforts to diversify South Africa’s exports and minimise the effects of a decline in demand in Europe brought on by political and economic uncertainties in the region. This will largely remain the case due to the economic crisis brought by COVID-19, and the country will also have to ensure a greater and strategic focus on Latin America and the Caribbean.

Conclusion

While political relations have lagged behind economic relations, Europe remains an important partner for South Africa in terms of bilateral relations and in terms of South Africa’s foreign policy in Africa due to the support provided by the EU towards Pan-African institutions. This is especially the case in a global landscape where multilateralism is increasingly under threat. While South Africa will continue to seek to diversify if political and trade relations in the global South and North, the new administration has sought to demonstrate to European partners that they remain of great importance for the country’s development. The current administration has thus sought to communicate the message that the country’s membership in the BRICS is more about diversifying its strategic partnerships than it is about a rejection of the political and economic relations with Europe, contributing to a more positive atmosphere towards the partnership.

Timofei Bordachev

BRICS and Europe: International Politics Reconsidered. In Lieu of Conclusions

This overview of the BRICS countries' national policies has revealed both similarities and differences in their positions based on their history of contact with European countries, current economic and political relations, and views of modern Europe in the member countries. Recall that this report is an attempt to see international politics in a new light, in contrast to the traditional approaches employed for centuries. Europe and the West in general dominated the international stage for over 500 years, primarily owing to its military might and economic and ideological leadership.

European political philosophy created the foundations of the modern science of international relations. "Whose realm, his religion" – this principle of the Peace of Augsburg has always shaped the relationship between leadership in global politics and the accepted views on it. Every previous world order – the Peace of Westphalia, the Vienna peace settlement, the Versailles-Washington system and the post-war peace negotiated in Yalta – was ultimately a European order meant to deal with issues of war and peace in Europe, and based on European principles and rules of inter-state relations.

The balance of international affairs is changing. The breathtaking growth of Asian countries' real-world influence on the global economy and politics has shifted the axis to Asia, thereby diminishing the European order's practical significance for global stability. True, Europe still has the potential to cause a new world war, because it is where Russia comes into direct contact with the world's largest military bloc, NATO. But the future of the world no longer depends

directly on relations among European nations. As Henry Kissinger once said, the fall of the Soviet Union is more important than the unification of Germany, and that the rise of China is more important than the fall of the Soviet Union.

Europe is no longer the epicentre of international politics, but it remains an active participant. This is why it is so important to try to discern the outlines of the new, more regionally diversified world that is taking shape. But to glimpse it, a change of lenses is required. International politics can no longer be viewed from a European vantage point, as the material basis of this paradigm is disintegrating. The new material basis of international politics calls for a fresh perspective.

The traditional way of viewing the political picture of the world is reminiscent of classical Chinese philosophy in which all other states were assessed in relation to the Middle Kingdom – how connected and physically close they were to it, and whether they were deemed a threat. This viewpoint is understandable given the reality of its origin, but it hardly offers an adequate view of the world, which is much more variegated and complex. Despite the diversity of relations within Europe, traditional views of international politics beyond its borders – at least in the past 300 years – did not differ from this conception of the world as divided between the Middle Kingdom and “the barbarians.” It was an adequate approach at a time when Europe was the primary source of wars, investments and ideas. But today the inadequacy of this approach and the weakness of the underlying analytical tools have become undeniable.

In light of Europe’s influence and the important place it holds in international affairs (whether as a political subject or object), it can hardly be considered inconsequential for us. Therefore, we need to know how the leading non-European countries see Europe and its place in their interests. It is also obvious that these relations are important but not vital for non-European states in terms of their survival in international politics and the global economy. For such

countries as Russia, relations with Europe may be among its foreign policy priorities, but it sees Europe as one of a number of important partners rather than the centre of the world. For new giants like India and China, Europe is an important factor, but still just one of many to be weighed as they pursue their global or regional ambitions. Brazil and South Africa have considerable interests in Europe, but they view themselves as regional leaders whose relationship with Europe is not an interest in and of itself, to be considered in isolation from more important strategic priorities.

We do not intend to conclude this report by urging the five largest non-Western countries to formulate a common approach towards the Europe of today. Indeed, such an approach is no longer relevant: the BRICS countries need not try to forge a common interest by compromising their individual interests and values. It is not even possible for this new type of international association in this new era. But we believe that the view of Europe we propose – as an element of a broader global picture and strategy rather than an intrinsically valuable partner – will increasingly gain traction in the expert and political discourse.

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