

INDIA-SWEDEN STRATEGIC COMPASS

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INDIA-SWEDEN

New Directions: India, Sweden, and the United States

In January 2025, the leaders of Sweden and India respectively congratulated Donald Trump on another four years in office as President of the United States of America. The countries comprising of the Nordic region signaled interest in strengthening U.S. relations, while India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed enthusiasm for enhancing the India-U.S. Comprehensive Global and Strategic Partnership.



Trump's resumption of presidential duties has stirred significant diplomatic tensions, particularly with Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, following acerbic calls over the U.S. acquiring Greenland. This initiative has raised concerns, especially among NATO allies. However, India appears to maintain a steady diplomatic course, according to U.S. Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti. India's relationship with the United States has demonstrated remarkable consistency across administrations. This enduring bipartisan consensus reflects India's value as a Western partner.

Among other things, the repeated Greenland discourse has prompted NATO members to consider strengthening both conventional alliances and external partnerships. Sweden's recent NATO membership positions it uniquely to both reinforce European and North American relations while simultaneously expanding its cooperation beyond these boundaries.

Likewise, India presents itself as a potential strategic partner for Sweden in matters of security and

commerce. This is particularly significant given recent U.S. trade policy announcements, including substantial tariff increases on Canada, Mexico, China, and now the EU.

Sweden's Foreign Trade Minister Benjamin Dousa's statement to Sveriges Radio reinforces this shift in priority partnerships: "Sweden is also pushing for progress to be made with India, Indonesia, and Malaysia" in response to uncertainty around U.S. policy positions toward the EU.

The current global dynamics, characterized by the unpredictable nature of the U.S. and China rivalry, may catalyze the formation of new diplomatic alignments while reinforcing existing partnerships, such as those between Sweden and India. While the U.S. remains integral to India and Sweden respectively, both nations are exploring autonomy in their diplomatic paths. More on this topic in the 'Special Feature' section.

Sources: *New York Times*, *Sveriges Radio*, February 2, 2025; *Sweden Herald*, November 4, 2024.

Event: India-Sweden AI Collaboration

On March 6, 2025, the event 'AI for Industry: Driving the Sweden-India Business Partnership' convened in Gothenburg to explore AI's transformative potential in Swedish and Indian industries. The conference highlighted the complementary strengths of both nations, such as Sweden's advanced sustainable technologies intersecting with India's robust AI-driven software and analytics capabilities.

Indian startups and IT firms are delivering sophisticated AI solutions, while Swedish companies deploy these developing technologies to enhance productivity and sustainability. Collaborative initiatives like the Sweden-India Innovation Bridge are accelerating AI adoption across critical sectors, such as healthcare.

The event explored several key themes: how AI is transforming core business operations (e.g., automation, optimization); what are the top use cases of AI across industries; what measurable

outcomes have companies seen with AI adoption. Finally, the risks and challenges: How to manage talent, technology integration, and leadership buy-in. The event was hosted by the Sweden-India Business Council (SIBC).

Source: *Sweden-India Business Council*, March 6, 2025.

SAAB Signs MoU on Laser Warning System

In February, the Swedish aerospace and defense company SAAB formally signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL). This MoU signifies collaboration on the Electronic Warfare land Laser Warning System-310 (LWS-310). This agreement advances the established partnership between SAAB and HAL that began in 2005 during the development of the Advanced Light Helicopter Program. Likewise, this also augments the pre-existing defense MoU between the governments of India and Sweden, originally signed in 2009.



The LWS-310 provides immediate threat warning and classification capabilities, allowing combat management systems to deploy effective counter-measures against laser threats, thereby enhancing combat vehicles' situational awareness and defensive capabilities.

This agreement establishes "a Maintenance Transfer of Technology framework compliant with Indian Defense Procurement Procedure", enabling HAL to indigenously manufacture the LWS-310 system in India. The arrangement was described by Mats Palmberg, Chairman & Managing Director of SAAB



India: “This MoU demonstrates Saab’s dedication to localization and indigenization in India through strategic partnership with an Indian enterprise, guaranteeing continued Security of Supply for Indian Armed Forces.” This announcement came shortly after SAAB established its first manufacturing hub outside of Sweden in Haryana, India.

Source: SAAB at Aero-India 2025, February 7, 2025.

Sweden in India: Trade, Commerce, and Technology

In early February, Mr. Jitin Prasada, India’s Minister of State in Commerce and Industry (Electronics and Information Technology) had an engaging discussion with the Sweden-India Friendship Group of the Swedish Parliament. This dialogue sought to strengthen India’s partnership in trade, technology, and innovation to drive mutual growth between the two nations.

Equally, on Sweden’s side, the Sweden-India Friendship Group concluded a productive visit to India, including two days in New Delhi. Led by Ms. Margareta Cederfelt, the delegation comprised of nine members of Sweden’s Parliament (including representatives from four different parties and six committees), all of whom were committed to deepening Sweden-India bilateral relations, much like their hosts. During the visit, the delegation engaged in several high-level engagements, including a meeting with the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Mr. Harivansh Narayan Singh.



discussions on gender issues in India with Dr. Ranjana Kumari and Ms. Valerie Hohman, Head of Organisational Development at the Centre for Social Research, India.

Sources: JitinPrasada on X, February 6, 2025; Sweden in India on LinkedIn, February 17, 2025.

Deepening Ties in Tamil Nadu with Robotics

In January, Swedish Deputy Head of Mission, Mr. Christian Kamill, participated in the inauguration of two strategic facilities in Tamil Nadu, alongside Tamil Nadu’s IT Minister Dr. Palanivel Thiagarajan, Swedish Honorary Consul General Mr. Arun Vasu, and Scandinavian Robot Systems (India) Managing Director Mr. Arvind Vasu.

The ceremony marked the launch of Scandinavian Robot System’s AB (RSP) production facility in Chennai. The plant, established by the Västerås-based company, aims to localize production and establish India as a key manufacturing hub for South Asia.

India’s robotics sector has demonstrated significant growth in recent years: from 1,500-2,000 units annually in 2002 to approximately 8,500 robots in 2023. Data from the International Federation for Robotics projects consumption is projected to exceed 10,000 units in the coming year.

RSP India specializes in peripheral equipment for industrial robots. The company evolved from ABB’s robotics department and focuses on tool changers



that enhance robot versatility across operations, including drilling and welding.

The Chennai facility will initially produce dress packs for robots, with plans to expand through local supplier partnerships. RSP President Mr. Eddie Eriksson emphasized the strategic importance of the facility: “Localizing production enables rapid customization and efficient customer response, while establishing our South Asian hub alongside our European and North American operations.”

Sources: KNN India, January 22, 2025; Embassy of Sweden in India (Instagram). The Hindu Business Line, January 30, 2025.

India-Sweden Climate Collaboration

In mid-January, Swedish State Secretary for Climate and Enterprise Dr. Daniel Westlén concluded a short but significant two-day visit to India, advancing the India-Sweden partnership on climate action and sustainability. The visit encompassed key meetings with Indian officials, alongside demonstrations of Swedish green technology in India.

At the National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE), Dr. Westlén met with NISE Director General Mohammad Rihan to discuss strengthening collaboration in solar energy research, development, and skill-building. The visit featured a review of the Spowdi Smart Farm, which showcased cutting-edge Swedish solar-powered irrigation technology designed to enhance farming efficiency and sustainability for small-scale Indian farmers.



The third India-Sweden Joint Working Group on environment convened during the visit, focusing on climate action, circular economy initiatives, and the Leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT). The proceedings concluded with a productive meeting between Dr. Westlén and Mr. Tanmay Kumar, Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, where they explored Sweden’s potential contributions to India’s energy transformation.

This diplomatic engagement reflects the growing momentum in India-Sweden cooperation on environmental challenges and sustainable development, particularly in areas of renewable energy, circular economy practices, and industry transition. The visit demonstrated shared commitment to practical collaboration in addressing global environmental challenges while fostering technological and economic partnerships.

Sources: Embassy of Sweden, India; Embassy of India, Sweden, January 17, 2025.

India Celebrates Republic Day

On January 26, 2025, India celebrated its 76th Republic Day, marking the anniversary of the Constitution of India coming into effect, with celebrations being held across India and Sweden. Swedish Ambassador to India Mr. Jan Thesleff took this opportunity to reflect on his connection to India in the *Hindustan Times*:

“My time in India so far has been nothing short of extraordinary, elevated by its vibrant traditions. The country’s rich culture with a mix of festivals, music, and art is astonishing. Witnessing the celebration of Diwali with its lights and joy, the sense of togetherness as well as experiencing Holi’s multitude of colors have been some of the most memorable highlights of my stay. This, together with India’s innovative and free spirit, constitutes a unique blend that is truly inspiring.”

Meanwhile, the Embassy of India in Stockholm hosted a dignified celebration marking India’s 76th Republic Day. Sweden’s Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs,



Mr. Dag Hartelius, delivered the keynote address, emphasizing the robust partnership between India and Sweden. He highlighted the expanding bilateral cooperation in trade, culture, and technology, describing the alliance as instrumental in addressing timely global challenges.

Mr. Rakesh Tiwari, Chargé d’Affaires of the Indian Embassy, also spoke about the enduring diplomatic relationship between the two nations. His address highlighted India’s emerging global role and the ongoing collaboration with Sweden in critical areas including climate action, clean energy initiatives, and sustainable development.

The ceremony was attended by distinguished Swedish government officials, including Secretary of State for Climate and Environment Dr. Daniel Westlén and Ms.



Margareta Cederfelt. The event drew participation from Stockholm’s diplomatic community, prominent members of the Indian migrant community, and other distinguished guests. The celebration featured cultural performances showcasing India’s heritage through music, dance, and traditional attire. The gathering served as a celebration of India’s independence and a testament to the strengthening bonds of friendship and cultural exchange between India and Sweden.

Sources: *India in Sweden (Instagram)*, January 26, 2025; *Sweden in India (Facebook)*, January 28, 2025.

SPECIAL FEATURES

PM Modi Visits the White House in February 2025

On February 13, following a friendly exchange of words during the second inauguration of Donald Trump, PM Modi and President Trump met for a face-to-face dialogue to launch a series of initiatives in defense, trade, energy security, technology, multi-lateral cooperation, and people-to-people movement.

In defense, India will increase the procurement of U.S. equipment and announced the new Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance (ASIA). Regarding trade, the two agreed on expanding bilateral trade under the “Mission 500” – which is supposed to double total bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030 – and announced the beginning of negotiations for the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by fall of 2025.

Furthermore, the leaders underscored the importance of enhancing the production of hydrocarbons to improve global energy prices and to secure affordable and reliable energy access for their citizens. The U.S. supports India in joining the International Energy Agency as a member alongside their commitment to working together to build U.S.-designed nuclear reactors in India.

In technology, the two nations have launched the U.S.-India TRUST (Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology) to promote the



application of critical and emerging technologies in multiple sectors. The first project engaged under the TRUST program is the U.S.-India Roadmap on Accelerating AI Infrastructure. They also wish to encourage public and private investment to expand Indian manufacturing capacity in the U.S., particularly for pharmaceutical ingredients in critical medicines.

Moreover, they have announced plans for a NASA-ISRO effort through AXIOM to bring the first Indian astronaut to the International Space Station (ISS). The dialogue also saw the launch of the Indian Ocean Strategic Venture, a new bilateral, whole-of-government forum to advance coordinated investments in economic connectivity and commerce.

Source: The White House, February 13, 2025.

India Increases Imports of U.S. Oil After Modi's Visit to the White House

During Modi's visit to the White House, the PM and President Trump touched on India's import tariffs on energy, defined by Trump as a "big problem". Prior to Modi's visit, President Trump stated "our allies are worse than our enemies" when it comes to import taxes. Consequentially, in an effort to soften the impending trade barriers, the PM assured his openness to reducing tariffs on U.S. goods, cooperating in the repatriation of undocumented Indian emigrants and purchasing military US F-35 jets. PM Modi also made continuous references and parallels between the Make American Great Again (MAGA) and his own version: Make India Great Again (MIGA), defining the two concepts as "A Mega partnership for prosperity."

Source: BBC, February 14, 2025.

Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Washington DC

Shortly following Trump's inauguration, India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar took part in the Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting with his Japanese, Australian, and American counterparts: Mr. Takeshi Iwaya, Senator Hon. Penny Wong, and Marco Rubio. The meeting focused on Beijing's military and economic activities in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in the South China Sea, in continuity with previous meetings held during the Biden administration.

The summit provided an occasion for Quad members to demonstrate further commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, and to reaffirm the importance of allies and coordination in the area. Dr. Jaishankar echoed these commitments in a post on "X", where he defined the summit as a priority of Trump's second administration. On the same post, the Foreign Minister stated: "The meeting today sends a clear message that in an uncertain and volatile world, the Quad will continue to be a force for global good." During the event, Mr. Iwaya also raised serious concern over North Korea's missile activities. The meeting concluded with the decision to host the next Quad Leaders' Summit in India.



Sources: Dr. Jaishankar on X, January 21, 2025; MOFA, Reuters, MEA, January 22, 2025.

Press Conference of the Indian Foreign Ministry on Trump's Second Term and Quad Foreign Ministers Meeting

During a press conference on January 22, Dr. Jaishankar signaled that the U.S. is willing to develop the bilateral ties established during the first Trump administration, marked by a separate talk held with the newly appointed National Security Advisor Michael Waltz, where the two shared similar approaches to their respective national interests.

However, Dr. Jaishankar pointed out that – it being the first couple of days of the new administration – the talks held with U.S. representatives have only broadly touched on shared objectives. The minister highlighted that there is a need to overcome the “burden of regulations and the complexity of the processes” to make it smoother than past attempts. He also wished to boost cooperation in technology, industry, education, defense, and security domains.

During the inauguration event, Dr. Jaishankar took the occasion to address the widely spread concerns over delayed visa issuance for Indian citizens, another impairment for the relationship due to its impact on businesses and people, arguably the foundation of the U.S.-India relationship.

Source: MEA, January 23, 2025.

INDIA-NORDIC

India-Denmark Partnership Grows in Food Processing and Safety

The 5th Joint Working Group on Food Processing and Food Safety brought together key stakeholders from India and Denmark to explore new avenues of collaboration in the sector. Joint Secretary Preet Pal Singh and Deputy Director General Tejs Binderup chaired the meeting, which also included representatives from India's Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI), the Danish Veterinary and Food Agency (DVFA), and NIFTEM, APEDA, MPEDA, AYUSH, and Invest India.



Discussions focused on strengthening cooperation in food safety, skill development, and processing technologies. Denmark shared insights into DVFA's strategic activities for 2025. It introduced the upcoming Strategic Sector Cooperation (SSC) Project for Agriculture and Food, which will include the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India as a partner.

The meeting paved the way for knowledge sharing and capacity building between the two countries. India and Denmark look forward to further strengthening ties, with MoFPI set to visit Denmark for the next Joint Working Group meeting in 2026.

Source: DenmarkinIndia on X, January 27, 2025.

Norway and India Expand Collaboration on Innovation and Trade

Innovation Norway and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) have reinforced their long-standing collaboration by signing an addendum to their cooperation agreement.



During a meeting between Innovation Norway CEO Mr. Håkon Haugli and FICCI Director General Jyoti Vij, both sides committed to advancing key sectors such as green technologies, circular economy, maritime, and digital transformation.

The partnership aims to leverage opportunities from the EFTA-India Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement, driving innovation and economic growth across both nations.

Source: LinkedIn, February 14, 2025.



Key Diplomatic Meetings at the Munich Security Conference, 2025

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar continued his diplomatic engagements at the Munich Security Conference (MSC) 2025. He held crucial discussions with key leaders from Europe and beyond on global security, democratic resilience, and multilateral cooperation.

In a key meeting, Dr. Jaishankar discussed India's growing engagement between Nordic countries with Sweden's Foreign Minister Mr. Tobias Billström. The conversation covered climate resilience and technological innovation, highlighting the potential for deeper cooperation.

Dr. Jaishankar also participated in a high-profile panel discussion titled "Shaping a Secure Future: Strengthening Global Resilience" alongside NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

During the panel discussion, Dr. Jaishankar underscored India's role in promoting a multipolar world and stressed the need for collaborative responses to global security challenges. He reaffirmed India's commitment to fostering stability and security through strategic partnerships and dialogue, emphasizing that the evolving international landscape requires collective action and responsible diplomacy. The Minister met Norwegian Finance Minister Jens Stoltenberg and Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs Lars Løkke



Rasmussen. Both meetings focused on the complex security architecture and its growing challenges in Europe.

The Munich Security Conference remains a vital platform for global leaders to address pressing international challenges. India plays a proactive role in shaping, mediating, and accommodating global discourse on security and democracy.

Sources: ANI, February 15, 2025; DrSJaishankar on X, February 15, 2025.

India's BPCL Signs LPG Supply Deal with Norway's Equinor

India's Energy Minister Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri announced at the India Energy Week conference that Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL) has signed a one-year agreement with Norwegian energy giant Equinor to supply propane and butane. The deal, finalized at prices lower than global market rates,

strengthens India's energy security and diversifies its LPG supply sources. It also encourages the growth of India-Norway energy cooperation, supporting India's goal of ensuring stable and cost-effective fuel supplies.

Ambassador of Norway to India Ms. May-Elin Stener highlighted strengthening the energy ties between Norway and India, stating: "Norway is proud to contribute to India's energy targets. This agreement between Equinor and BPCL is a great example of our growing business partnership."

Source: Reuters, February 13, 2025; NorwayInIndia on X, February 18, 2025.

India and Finland Mark 75 Years of Diplomatic Ties with Cultural Discussion

To celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations, the Embassy of India in Finland, alongside the University of Helsinki hosted a discussion highlighting the historical and cultural ties between the two nations.

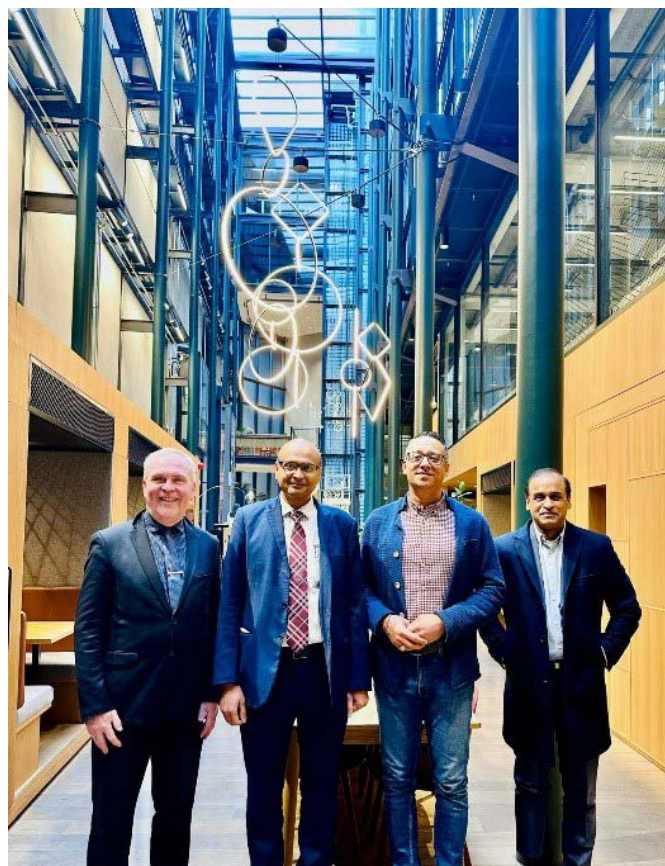
Ambassador Hemant H. Kotalwar and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Prof. Pirjo Hiidenmaa led the event, with insights from experts including Dr. Klaus Karttunen, Dr. Xenia Zeiler, Ms. Virpi Hämeen-



Anttila, Ms. Hanna Mannila, and Dr. Tito Grönöw. Moderated by Dr. Mikko Autere, the discussion engaged students and faculty, reinforcing the deep-rooted connections between India and Finland.

Sources: Embassy of India to Finland, IndEmb_Fin on X; India_in_Finland on Instagram, February 21, 2025.

India and Norway Strengthen Collaboration on SME Growth and Digital Transformation



Indian Ambassador to Norway Dr. Acquino Vimal visited SMB Norway on February 22 to discuss how Indian IT companies can collaborate with small and medium-sized Norwegian enterprises (SMEs) to drive growth and innovation.

During the visit, he met with Mr. Yousuf Gilani, Deputy Chairman of SMB Norge, Mr. Steinar Hoel Korsmo, President & CEO of Seed Forum Global, and Mr. Rajan Maheshwari, Country Head of TCS Norway.

Their discussions focused on how Indian IT expertise can help Norwegian businesses scale up, embrace digital transformation, and create new strategic partnerships. The meeting highlighted the growing business ties between India and Norway, showcasing the opportunities for collaboration in technology and innovation to support SME development.

Sources: *India in Norway Facebook, February 22, 2025; IndiainNorway X, February 22, 2025.*

Denmark and India Expand on Sustainable Maritime Initiatives

The Danish Maritime Authority (DMA) and the Danish Embassy participated in the Green Shipping Conclave 2025 (GSC-2025) in Mumbai, linking key stakeholders to discuss pathways for a more sustainable maritime sector in India. Hosted by the Directorate General of Shipping (DSG) and the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, the event featured high-level discussions on reducing carbon emissions and enhancing green shipping initiatives.

Danish representatives met with industry leaders during the conclave, including ZeroNorth and A.P. Moller-Maersk, to exchange perspectives on advancing sustainability in maritime operations. Their engagement highlighted Denmark’s continued support for India’s transition to cleaner shipping technologies.

The DMA and DSG also led a workshop on Alternative Design Approvals and Enforcement, emphasizing regulatory best practices and innovation in ship design. This initiative is part of the Indo-

Danish Centre of Excellence in Green Shipping, a key platform for knowledge-sharing and capacity building.

Through ongoing collaboration, Denmark and India are working toward a greener, more efficient maritime industry, reinforcing their commitment to sustainable development and innovation in global shipping.

Source: *Embassy of Denmark in India on LinkedIn, February 25, 2025.*

INDIA-EU

India-EU Human Rights Dialogue



On January 8, the EU in India delegation, alongside the Indian Joint Secretary (Europe West) within the Ministry of External Affairs engaged in “substantial, free, and frank discussions.” The dialogue sought to reaffirm the party’s commitment to democracy and to advance human rights. A particular point of agreement was the safeguarding of freedom, independence, and diversity of civil society actors and organizations, including journalists.

Sources: *EEAS, The Hindu, EU in India on X, January 8, 2025.*

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal Urges EU to Collaborate on Developing Modern Tech and Securing Critical Raw Material Supply Chains

During a bilateral summit on January 18 and 19 in Brussels, India’s Minister of Industry and Supply, Mr. Piyush Goyal, and Mr. Maroš Šefčovič, European



Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security, tackled the critical points of a potential mutually beneficial Free Trade Agreement.

Mr. Goyal and Mr. Šefčovič discussed the necessary steps to reinforce a commercially meaningful trade agenda: tariff and non-tariff barriers through simplification, and cost competitiveness for the benefit of businesses on both sides, as well as a diversification of trade partnerships for critical raw materials. The EU is a viable partner for India to develop cutting edge technologies and secure a resilient supply chain of these elements.

The representatives also discussed increased cooperation in trade and sustainable development in a fair manner concerning different states of economic advancement. This stands as a further step in cooperation under the India-EU Trade and Technology Council.

Source: The Hindu, January 19, 2025.

External Affairs Minister Jaishankar: “Our India-EU Relationship is More Important Than Ever Before”

On February 4, during his remarks at the 2nd IIC-Bruegel Annual Seminar in New Delhi, External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar expressed his consideration on the transformation of global trade, characterized by the fact that “the global intelligentsia have been in denial that [...] free trade was increasingly less and less fair trade.” Moreover, “diversifying production and building more resilient and reliable supply chains has emerged as a priority.” Continuing his remarks on multipolarity and rebalancing current geopolitical dynamics, he assessed that the EU-India relationship can be an important stabilizing factor.

Acknowledging the differences in priorities, he underlined EU-India kinship as two political democracies, pluralistic societies, and market economies, which are the base for incipient convergence. Indeed, engagement in common areas has already been shown in security, defense, and

technology cooperation. The Minister added that the key to a successful alignment lies in ensuring the efficiency of already-established processes and platforms.

Source: MEA; Hindustan Times, January 4, 2025.

India and France Plan Small Modular Nuclear Reactors

During PM Modi’s visit to Paris on February 13, India and France signed a letter of intent to develop modular nuclear reactors for civil use in pursuit of energy security and to transition to a low-carbon economy. According to Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, the letter of intent marks the beginning of cooperation in the design and production of reactors, increasing the number of projects in the field of nuclear power between India and France.



Source: BBC, February 13, 2025.

Modi Co-Chairs AI Action Summit 2025

Between the 10th and the 11th of February, India co-chaired the 2025 AI Action Summit: a multilateral initiative that brought together 100 countries and over 1,000 private sector and civil society representatives. They sought to discuss the development of inclusive, human-centered, and ethical AI. The summit assessed the R&D divide between countries, the necessity of standardization of AI risk management, early warning systems, and the obligation of states to prioritize innovation over rapid development.

In his opening remarks at the event, PM Modi emphasized how a global effort for AI standardization and governance is an opportunity, especially for those in the Global South, to reach the SDG goals faster. To achieve a positive global impact in AI, certain steps are required: increasing the number of open systems based on quality data sets, free from bias, people-centric applications. Moreover, developers must try to improve cybersecurity systems, and combat disinformation and deepfakes, ensuring the creation of the technology is rooted in local ecosystems.

Another major topic addressed was the considerable energy consumption of AI, which can be mitigated by renewable energies. This was used as the rationale for India and France co-chairing the Summit, due to their longstanding partnership in the Solar Alliance. Following this, PM Modi commented on the rapid development of AI infrastructures in India, underpinned by their value of democracy and accessibility. PM Modi concluded by encouraging participants to approach AI governance with a sense of responsibility, a crucial virtue for our collective future.

Sources: MEA, February 11, 2025; Atlantic Council, February 13, 2025.

Fourth India-EU Forum on Smart and Sustainable Urbanization

On February 13, high-level officials and experts from India, the EU, and its member-states, gathered to discuss the best practices on urban sustainable



development with an integrated approach. The forum reinforced a shared commitment from India and the EU to drive smart, sustainable, and inclusive urban development. This is in line with India's Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs programs and missions, promoting sustainable city models, public-private investments, climate action, and disaster risk reduction in cities across India, for which EU support has been crucial.

Source: EEAS, February 13, 2025.

INDIA-GLOBAL

India Maritime Defense

On January 15, India simultaneously launched a destroyer submarine and a frigate from the state-run Mazagon dockyard in Mumbai. The construction of such major naval assets marks significant progress toward India's goal of becoming a global leader in the naval defense industry and maritime security, as stated by PM Narendra Modi. This initiative is part of India's objective to assert itself in the Indian Ocean, an area of passage for roughly 95 percent of Indian trade (by volume). In recent years, the area has become an area of strategic competition between China and India.

Source: AP News, January 15, 2025.

A Thaw in India-China Relations

On January 27, 2025, India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met in Beijing following a pact on the resumption of military patrols near the Himalaya border, formally interrupted by violent clashes in 2020.

2025 marks the 75th anniversary of Sino-Indian diplomatic relations, and the occasion could be utilized to encourage diplomatic ties, restoring mutual trust and confidence among the public – as stated by a press release from the Indian Ministry of External Affairs. This meeting builds upon a previous gathering between China's President Xi Jinping and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year in



Kazan, where the two heads of state agreed on the resumption of positive relations.

The parties agreed on the provision of mutual support using a people-centric approach. In particular, Minister Wang Yi declared the countries should “meet each other halfway, explore more substantive measures, and strive to understand, support and achieve each other, rather than be suspicious of, alienate, and consume each other.”

In a separate dialogue, Secretary Misri announced the resumption of Indian pilgrimages to Tibet’s Mt. Kailash – one of the oldest holy sites in Hinduism and Buddhism – following interruptions in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This would resume academic people-to-people exchanges and direct air services. With regard to the Himalayan region, the parties have also restored hydrological data sharing and cooperation on trans-border rivers.

Sources: MEA; AP News January 27, 2025; DD News, January 28, 2025.

Davos World Economic Forum 2025

For India, the Davos World Economic Forum was an occasion to tackle issues of sustaining growth during global uncertainties and geopolitical tensions. The event provided two new key priorities for India to support its global growth: prioritizing services, service-led manufacturing, and narrowing the demographic dividend investment on people. Beyond

economics, India also expanded its geopolitical role, with President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen’s announcing a visit to New Delhi in February to reinforce “the strategic partnership with the largest country and democracy in the world.”

During a discussion on India’s Economic Blueprint, Minister of Railways and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw, presented India’s new economic strategy, based on four pillars: public investment in social, physical and digital infrastructure; focus on technology, manufacturing and innovation; inclusive growth; and simplification. The Minister and former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan both said that India was seeking to shift from low-skilled labor manufacturing to a focus on R&D, marketing and services: sectors that generate further value if compared to manufacturing. This would elevate India to compete with China and bring a leading edge to the Indian economy.



Indian entrepreneurs and investors have also pushed to foster an environment suitable for the expansion of startups beyond major cities, leveraging the momentum from India’s billion-dollar company valuations. As Shobana Kamineni, Executive Chairperson of Apollo Health said during an event: “[Indian growth expansion] it is not concentrated in Delhi. It’s about the states; it’s about the hundreds of cities that are coming up now.”

Digital healthcare and AI are two key sectors that have emerged in the dialogue on India during the event: the former has been developed through government spending which has risen from 1 percent to 2 percent. According to Ms. Kamineni, partnerships are the key to fostering telemedicine and narrowing the healthcare divide between big cities and less populated areas.

India, like all countries, must face the issue of upskilling its workforce with the arrival of AI. However, the country is already in an advantageous position, since it is one of several countries leading in enrolment numbers in GenAI training, with corporate sponsorship playing a significant role in boosting uptake.

Sources: *The Hindu*, January 21, 2025; *DD News*, *World Economic Forum*, *Economic Times*, January 24, 2025.

Subianto's Visit to India and Signing of the Maritime Safety and Security Agreement.

The presence of Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto was an occasion for the Indian and Indonesian heads of state to discuss salient aspects of the India-Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, according to PM Modi. Welcoming President Subianto, the two leaders spoke about deepening India-Indonesia relations in areas such as security, defense manufacturing, trade, FinTech, and AI. Subianto thanked India for supporting Indonesia's admission as a full member of BRICS, adding that the two presidents had an "intensive, very frank



discussion", expressing his hopes for even further cooperation, especially economic.

Furthermore, the meeting allowed for the signing of a maritime safety and security agreement. The agreement was finalized after a bilateral discussion of the Indonesian Navy Chief Admiral Muhammad Ali and the Chief of the Indian Navy Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi, who discussed key areas, such as advancing joint initiatives like Exercise Samudra Shakti, and addressing shared maritime challenges like piracy and illegal activities at sea.

Sources: *AP News*, *PM of India*, January 25, 2025; *DD News*, January 27, 2025; *The Diplomat*, January 28, 2025.

Singapore's President Tharman Shanmugaratnam Visit to India

In January, Singapore's President Tharman visited India for the first time, in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Singapore-India diplomatic relations. President Modi and President Tharman discussed cooperation on semiconductors, digitalization, skilling, and connectivity fields, expanding the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership signed in September 2024. The visit is part of President Shanmugaratnam's projection of Singapore as an integral player in India's 'Act East Policy' and Indo-Pacific vision.

On the same visit, the state government of Odisha signed eight Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with Singapore-based companies. They focused on skill development, semiconductors, and sustainable energy. High-tech and green hydrogen aims to attract global investment, accelerating the transformation of Odisha into a technology hub. Regarding green energy, President Shanmugaratnam presented a plan to establish a "renewable energy corridor" to strengthen their cooperation in emerging technologies and industries. Also discussed was a "data corridor" to link Gujarat's GIFT City with Singapore to facilitate secure and trusted data exchange between financial institutions.

Sources: *MFA*, January 13, 2025; *PM of India*, January 16, 2025; *India Governmental Briefing*, January 22, 2025; *Strait Times*, January 23, 2025.



India Calls for Plurilateralism and Common Ground at G20 in South Africa

At the G20, held on January 21 in South Africa, External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar underscored the importance of plurilateralism to address current challenges in the global order. He encouraged nations to uphold international law and multilateral cooperation. Touching on recent events, such as those in Gaza, Lebanon, the Russia-Ukraine War, he advocated for dialogue and respect for international law as stabilizing pillars. Similarly, he criticized the lack of global attention to other conflicts, such as those in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and the Sahel, stating

that these crises deserve as much focus as other geopolitical flashpoints.

Regarding the role of the United Nations, he assessed the dysfunctionality of multilateral institutions based on opaque international cooperation, urging a change in its working methods and representation. Moreover, he emphasized the multipolar nature of the institution as key to harmonizing viewpoints amid multiple challenges throughout the years. He concluded by urging representatives to learn from recent events, striving to de-escalate disputes that may become conflicts.

Source: DD News, February 24, 2025.



EDITOR'S NOTE

The evolving geopolitical landscape, particularly marked by the U.S.-China rivalry, is indeed prompting nations to reassess their diplomatic strategies and realign their foreign policies. For countries like India and Sweden, this context presents both challenges and opportunities in navigating their international relations in 2025.

India, with its growing economic and military capabilities, is keen to assert its autonomy on the global stage while maintaining strong ties with the U.S. Through platforms like the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), India has solidified its partnership with the U.S., Japan, and Australia, focusing on regional security and economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. However, India is also pursuing a multi-vector foreign policy that seeks cordial relationships with other major powers, including Russia and China, allowing it to leverage its position without over-dependence on any single country.

Similarly, Sweden, as a member of the EU, is navigating its relations with both the U.S. and China. While the U.S. remains a key partner, Sweden's commitment to

the European Union's approach to trade and diplomacy requires a careful balancing act, particularly in light of its reliance on trade with China. The ongoing tensions around technology, trade policies, and global governance issues compel Sweden to craft a foreign policy that emphasizes European values, sustainability, and security.

The partnership between India and Sweden exemplifies how middle powers can forge strategic alliances in this complex environment. Their relationship has strengthened through joint initiatives in innovation, climate change, and sustainable development, demonstrating a shared commitment to key global challenges. As both nations pursue greater autonomy in their diplomatic endeavors, this partnership may further deepen, presenting a model for other countries navigating similar geopolitical complexities.

This balance of autonomy and partnership may lead to new alignments and innovative collaborations that address global challenges while enhancing their respective positions on the world stage.

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Disclaimer: The views expressed here are as published in the original sources and not of the ISDP or the SCSA-IPA.

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The Institute for Security and Development Policy is a Stockholm-based independent and non-profit research and policy institute. The Institute is dedicated to expanding understanding of international affairs, particularly the interrelationship between the issue areas of conflict, security and development. The Institute's primary areas of geographic focus are Asia and Europe's neighborhood.

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