

# Issue

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# Brief

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**ISSUE NO. 643**  
**JUNE 2023**



# Leveraging the India-EU Partnership During India's G20 Presidency

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## **Abstract**

Amongst India's stated priorities in its G20 Presidency are reforming multilateral institutions, climate action alongside energy transition, digital transformation and governance, sustainable economic growth, and women's empowerment. In many of these concerns, countries in the Global North and Global South have serious divergences, thereby hampering progress towards consensus and unified action. To remove some of the deadlocks, India and Europe can use the G20 as a platform for cooperation and exhibit a relevant example of the possibilities of successful North-South collaboration. This brief explores how cooperation with European members within the G20 can help India succeed in its Presidency's goals. It makes a case for India-EU cooperation in three priority areas: reformed multilateralism, climate action and energy transition, and formulating a G20 policy on the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The India-EU partnership has expanded in recent years to cover domains other than trade. Among the drivers of the heightened diplomatic and political investment on both sides—despite differing positions on the Russia-Ukraine war—are the parallel shifts in threat perceptions of China, and the urge to diversify economic ties with like-minded partners.

Analysts have long noted that the India-EU partnership was not ‘strategic’ enough and was lacking a security dimension, which is crucial to India given conflicts at its borders.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, with India at the helm, the G20 could be a forum where this traditionally ‘non-strategic’ nature of the relationship could be useful, with India and the EU cooperating on areas like energy transition, which are among India’s priorities during its presidency.

Indeed, many of India’s stated priorities for the G20 also feature in the India-EU agenda and in India’s bilateral relations with EU member states. India’s ties with Europe could prove beneficial if the two sides capitalised on the momentum in their relationship towards constructive cooperation in the G20. Cooperation in the G20 can scale-up the scope of the India-EU partnership and India’s bilateral ties with European G20 countries, while also fulfilling the ambition to “coordinate in international fora” mentioned in most EU-India-related policy documents. The 2018 EU Strategy for India,<sup>2</sup> for example, as well as the EU-India Roadmap for 2025 emphasise the need to coordinate positions with India in multilateral forums and cooperate on global governance.<sup>3</sup> The joint statement released after the historic EU-India Leaders’ Meeting in 2021 also explicitly mentions the goal of cooperating in the G20,<sup>4</sup> as did the bilateral joint statements with member states like Germany.<sup>5</sup> Whether such statements will translate to coordinated policy and action within the G20 remains to be seen; after all, on many issues, India’s perspectives converge more with countries of the Global South than with Europe.

For its G20 presidency, India has emphasised that it would act as the voice of the Global South. On the one hand, this seems like the right approach given how developing countries are disproportionately bearing the brunt of global disruptions. Indeed, the International Monetary Fund has supported over 50 developing countries with around US\$24 billion in interest-free loans, since the pandemic.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the current G20 troika consists of three emerging economies—Indonesia, India and Brazil—and analysts expect issues of the Global South to take centre stage.

At the same time, however, it would be useful for India to explore opportunities for cooperation with like-minded countries both within the Global South and the present troika, as well as the Global North, particularly since the mitigation of challenges faced by the Global South require partnering with the Global North.

The G20's primary purpose is towards "collective action and inclusive collaboration amongst the major developed and emerging economies of the world."<sup>7</sup> India is well-positioned to lead in this effort: although it remains a developing country, it has performed well on areas such as climate action, energy transition, digital transformation, and healthcare resilience.

“Many of India’s stated priorities for the G20 also feature in the India-EU agenda and in India’s bilateral relations with EU member states.”

# Europe as a Natural Partner for India at the G20

India and Europe may seem unlikely allies in the G20 given their differing positions on many policy areas, including reforms of multilateral institutions, climate change, and the Russia-Ukraine war. Both, however, espouse principles of inclusivity, democracy, pluralism, and adherence to international norms.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, out of the G20 members, five are from Europe.<sup>9</sup> In addition, Spain is a permanent guest and the Netherlands has been invited by India as a guest country. While this outsized European representation is often criticised,<sup>10</sup> it gives European members unique bargaining clout.

The G20 mechanism is one of consensus, making the implementation of India's agenda contingent on such consensus. In turn, getting Europe on-board is critical to achieving this consensus. Moreover, both Europe and India are adept at operating through a consensus-based approach to decision-making, while bringing diverse stakeholders on-board, as evident in their respective mottos, "united in diversity" and "unity in diversity".<sup>11</sup> India and Europe are in a position to develop joint initiatives and lead efforts at the G20, where their combined strength could bridge differences and find solutions for the multiple crises facing the global community.

The following sections will make the case for India-EU cooperation at the G20 in three priority areas.

## Reformed Multilateralism

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war have required multilateral institutions to cope with complex global challenges in a heavily polarised environment. Yet, these institutions—including the United Nations, World Health Organization, and World Trade Organization—have failed to deliver solutions.<sup>12</sup>

For the EU, the practice of multilateralism is intrinsic to the Union and its external relations.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the concept of 'effective multilateralism' is central to the European Security Strategy, formulated in 2003 and which continues to guide the EU's external relations today.<sup>14</sup> The European External Action Service regards effective multilateralism as a key element in EU external policy, through which the Union "promotes an international system based on stronger multilateral cooperation and good global governance."<sup>15</sup>

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For India too, multilateralism has been a core tenet of its foreign policy. However, India is driven by “a strategic multilateralism where domestic interests influence and drive whether and how it helps address issues like climate change, protectionism and maritime insecurity, whenever multilateral efforts benefit national interests.”<sup>16</sup> Marking the 75th anniversary of the UN in September 2020, India advocated for a ‘reformed multilateralism’, which according to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, “reflects today’s global realities, gives voice to all stakeholders, addresses contemporary challenges and focuses on human welfare.”<sup>17</sup>

Both India and Europe, therefore, have a well-articulated interest in reforming multilateralism, which is also amongst the G20’s primary objectives. At the same time, there are long-standing divergences in Indian and European perspectives of multilateralism and its fundamental principles.

The EU’s ‘effective multilateralism’ prefers legally binding commitments and strong international regimes as instruments of global multilateral cooperation in economic, environmental, and social policies.<sup>18</sup> India’s preference, in contrast, is for a consensus-based intergovernmental approach with voluntary commitments and without treaty obligations. The focus is on economic development unrestricted by concerns relating to the environment or human rights, which are regarded as interference in its internal affairs.<sup>19</sup>

At the centre of the debate on UN reforms lies the structure of the UN Security Council and the veto power of the P5. India, while seeking a permanent seat, has long lamented the Council’s lack of inclusivity and representation to reflect contemporary geopolitical and economic realities.<sup>20</sup> India seeks a readjustment of power through its inclusion in existing multilateral frameworks, thereby seeking accommodation in the present order, while challenging European preponderance. For Europe, while it enjoys a privileged position in multilateral structures, it is aware of the impact of its outsized presence on questions of legitimacy and representation in global institutions. Thus, Europe too, aims to reform the existing system through inclusion of emerging powers that would adhere to the same pre-established rules. Even though Europe and India’s perspectives on multilateralism differ, neither of them are revisionist players vying for a new system or the creation of alternate international structures. Instead, both want to reform existing multilateral institutions.

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A report by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung states, “The confluence for respect for norms with considerable market power makes India and the EU natural partners to usher in a new era of multilateral cooperation.”<sup>21</sup> For a continent fundamentally based on the rule of law and the world’s fastest growing economy requiring a stable global order for growth, the crisis of multilateralism is particularly critical, providing greater reason to cooperate. This need for an effective rules-based multilateral system has only been exacerbated by China’s and Russia’s respective weaponisation of markets and energy interdependence.

Both India and Europe also have a shared interest in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific region that accounts for 40 percent of global trade and 62 percent of global GDP.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, creating a multilateral system with stable security structures and institutional arrangements is imperative to ensure economic stability, adherence to the rule of law, and an equitable distribution of power in the region. The EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, which links stability in the region with stability on the European continent, accords a prominent mention to India,<sup>23</sup> demonstrating the normative convergence between New Delhi and Brussels in the Indo-Pacific.

Furthermore, for India, differences with the Global North have not necessarily translated into solidarity amongst the BRICS countries, with the grouping’s will to reform institutional structures to accommodate emerging powers, compromised due to internal divisions such as India-China security tensions.<sup>24</sup> For the EU, often the lack of internal cohesion between member states, where they spend more effort negotiating with each other than with third parties, hampers the extent of European influence on global governance.<sup>25</sup> Yet the EU’s joint vaccine procurement programme during the Covid-19 pandemic, followed by the Russia-Ukraine war, have strengthened the EU’s ability to act as one, as evident in its multiple sanctions packages against Russia. Notwithstanding the multilateral crisis, from 2019 to 2020, EU member states’ support to multilateral organisations increased from US\$25.5 billion to US\$28 billion.<sup>26</sup> Over half the contributions to multilateral institutions are made by EU member states.<sup>27</sup>

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## A G20 policy on the Russia-Ukraine War

During the Leaders' Summit in Bali towards the tail end of Indonesia's G20 presidency, it was evident that member countries were divided on the Ukraine conflict, with mounting calls from European members to expel Russia from the G20.<sup>28</sup> This polarisation, along with the issue of US and China's strategic competition that predated the war, has carried forward into India's G20 presidency. Disagreements played out during a meeting of G20 Finance Ministers in Bengaluru in February, followed by a meeting of G20 Foreign Ministers in New Delhi in March, both of which failed to see a consensus on the war.

India therefore faces the challenge of steering a common position on the conflict. As reiterated by the Council on Foreign Relations, "The G20 should facilitate the end of the conflict - a necessary precondition for any effective economic and social measures the G20 can hope to achieve."<sup>29</sup>

India is well-positioned to attempt to persuade countries to retreat from the battlefield. Since the start of the conflict, media agencies across the world have highlighted India's unique position of having ties with both Russia and the Western alliance supporting Ukraine, referring to it as a "strong candidate" to play a role in de-escalation efforts and broker the elusive peace.<sup>30</sup> It was the Indian delegation's proactive efforts that managed to achieve consensus on the Indonesian presidency's G20 Communiqué echoing PM Modi's words, "Today's era is not an era of war."<sup>31</sup> India also played a role in the UN-led grain deal between Kyiv and Moscow, and in defusing the situation around Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.<sup>32</sup> Despite its continued engagements with Russia and its decision not to overtly criticise the country, India has also unequivocally urged Russia to pursue diplomacy and dialogue, while reiterating the war's repercussions on the Global South.<sup>33</sup> Despite abstentions at the UN, Indian statements underlined the core principles of the UN Charter, international law, and territorial integrity and sovereignty.<sup>34</sup>

As the war drags on in its second year, the likelihood that war fatigue compels stakeholders to weigh its continuing costs could brighten prospects for negotiation. A number of G20 members will likely favour a resolution on the conflict, yet the European members could be most difficult to bring on-board towards a negotiation process given that the war is an existential issue for many Europeans. Yet a study by the European Council on Foreign Relations demonstrates that while European countries are divided based on those that



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favour justice and want Russia to be punished, and those that favour negotiations and peace;<sup>35</sup> it is promising that the EU member states tilting towards the peace camp are also G20 member states. To achieve a common G20 policy on the war, it will be incumbent upon India to work with the forum's European member states including the EU that is coordinating Europe's economic sanctions response towards Russia.

European countries are divided on their position on Russia.<sup>36</sup> Some are ramping up their military aid and equipment to Ukraine, such as Germany whose latest package of aid to Russia amounted to nearly US\$3 billion;<sup>37</sup> others, meanwhile, such as France have displayed openness to negotiation proposals, including those made by Chinese leader Xi Jinping. The upcoming election in the US in 2024 is also raising concerns in European capitals that the willingness of American politicians to demonstrate support for Ukraine will wane—this could push European leaders to favour negotiations this year.<sup>38</sup>

Countries like Türkiye and Israel have tried but failed to encourage negotiations, and it would be useful for India to play a more proactive approach in pushing the two sides towards a political outcome. There is a lesson to be learnt from the G8 meeting in mid-1999 in Germany, which paved the way for a reduction in tensions between the US and Russia, and a subsequent UNSC consensus ending the bombing of Kosovo.<sup>39</sup> While the G8 is much smaller and less diverse in membership, the consensus was an achievement and gives reason for cautious optimism in the present scenario.

According to analysts, the G20's primary challenges revolve around legitimacy, effectiveness, and representation.<sup>40</sup> Achieving a resolution on the Russia-Ukraine war could help address at least two of these—it could pave the way for effective cooperation on other issues and thereby enhance the legitimacy of the G20 itself. The challenge of representation can be dealt with at a later time, through potential expansion, but the G20 must first prove its mettle and maintain its relevance in the global governance architecture.

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## Climate Change and Energy Transition

Climate action and clean energy transition are linked: to tackle climate challenges, transforming the energy sector—responsible for three-quarters of global emissions—is paramount.<sup>41</sup> Both India and Europe, over the past decade, have shifted their approach to this issue.

India is a member of the BASIC negotiating bloc that comprises the emerging nations of Brazil, South Africa, and China and which was created as a response to the pressure levied by developed countries, who themselves have failed to meet their climate obligations.<sup>42</sup> The 2009 Copenhagen Summit, which urged developed countries in particular to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions under the 2° Celsius limit, was widely regarded as a turning point not only for the emergence of the BASIC grouping but also with regards to the Europeans who found themselves sidelined by their strategic partners at the summit.<sup>43</sup> This showed how European preferences are not generalisable to the rest of the world, and provoked a shift in Europe to pay heed to the perspectives of its partners.<sup>44</sup>

India's approach also witnessed a shift during the 2015 Paris Agreement. A realisation of India's serious vulnerabilities to climate change, and a change in global attitudes towards placing the burden of reducing emissions on large emerging economies, were responsible for this shift, thereby encouraging India to put in strong efforts to tackle climate change.<sup>45</sup> Since then, the Indian approach to development has included climate-friendly policies to also contribute towards global climate mitigation efforts.

India's G20 presidency is providing a platform to highlight the challenges faced by developing nations and underscore the need for financial support to tackle climate change mitigation efforts. However, underscoring the needs of the Global South and championing the cause of climate justice will not be enough. For its G20 presidency to see fruitful outcomes, India will need to work with developed nations and achieve North-South compatibility to fulfil ambitions towards cleaner energy through facilitating the movement of climate financing and technology through member countries.

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India's positions on climate change, emphasising the developed world's responsibility in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the need for funds and technology transfers for developing countries, have echoed sentiments of the wider Global South. An entrenched North-South divide, relating to concerns around differentiated responsibility and equity, characterises global climate negotiations.<sup>46</sup> While all nations agree on the need for greener and cleaner growth, the transition towards renewables with the creation of appropriate physical infrastructure is costly and requires some US\$1.3 trillion globally per year by 2030.<sup>47</sup>

India and Europe are already working together on energy transition and climate change through several bilateral cooperation arrangements aimed at meeting both, domestic green ambitions and global commitments. Ever since the Paris Agreement, which increased convergences between Indian and European perspectives, climate change has emerged amongst the pillars of the EU-India partnership.<sup>48</sup>

In 2016, the two sides signed a Clean Energy and Climate Partnership<sup>49</sup> which seeks to deliver concrete solutions and technical assistance in areas of renewable energy and smart grids. In addition, EU-India Energy Panel meetings are regularly held, besides a High-Level Dialogue on Climate Change that began in April 2021.<sup>50</sup> The International Solar Alliance (ISA)—jointly established by India and France in 2015 and which currently has 110 member and signatory countries—is leading the way for harnessing solar energy globally. Moreover, the European Central Bank has invested over €2.5 billion (approx. US\$2.7 billion) in India—the largest amount in renewable energy financial support outside Europe—in infrastructure, renewable energy and climate projects. Over €640 million (\$693 million) in solar projects are being funded to meet the energy needs of over 4 million Indian households.<sup>51</sup>

A number of new agreements have also been signed in recent times, including: the 'India-Germany partnership on Green and Sustainable Development'<sup>52</sup> and the 'India-Italy Strategic Partnership on Energy Transition'.<sup>53</sup> With their successes in the areas of wind and solar energy, India and Europe are also collaborating on innovation on newer technologies such as green hydrogen through the EU-India Green Hydrogen Forum<sup>54</sup> alongside India's National Hydrogen Mission.

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This year, Sweden holds the six-month rotating presidency of the Council of the EU, through which it has clout to shape the EU agenda coinciding with India's G20 presidency. This could prove relevant as Sweden is emerging as an important partner for India in the domains of innovation, sustainability, and green industry transition through the LeadIT initiative.<sup>55</sup> Through the India-Sweden Innovations Accelerator and the India-Sweden Green Transition Partnership, the two nations are exchanging green tech solutions and expertise for sustainable growth through innovations.<sup>56</sup>

India has performed well in the realm of renewables, with solar and wind energy comprising 37 percent of its total power capacity.<sup>57</sup> By 2030, India aims to generate 60 percent of its electricity through renewables.<sup>58</sup> In addition, it has been recognised as the only G20 country to have fulfilled its climate mitigation commitments in the Paris Agreement without external help, according to the *2020 Climate Transparency Report*.<sup>59</sup> PM Modi's LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) initiative, "a behaviour-based movement that draws from India's rich, ancient sustainable traditions to nudge consumers, and in-turn markets, to adopt environmentally-conscious practices", is another important step towards this ambition.<sup>60</sup> As a credible model for developing countries to follow in finding a balance between economic growth and environmental concerns, these experiences can also enable India to act as a bridge between the G20 and developing nations.

The EU has also emerged as a leader in climate change diplomacy at the forefront of the globe's green efforts, with almost half the world's climate funding coming from the EU, where projects in emerging countries accounted for US\$26.9 billion in 2019.<sup>61</sup> European countries possess a wealth of technical knowhow and experience in technological innovation across sectors, with much to offer developing countries to modernise towards sustainable growth in this regard while creating business opportunities for themselves. The successful Energy Efficiency Hub was initiated during Germany's G20 presidency in 2017. Moreover, Europe is addressing climate change through initiatives like the European Green Deal, the 'Fit for 55' package, and the REPowerEU Plan that aim to make Europe the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050.<sup>62</sup> The Russia-Ukraine war has further accelerated Europe's green efforts to reduce energy dependency on Russia.

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Table 1, by ORF scholars Renita D'Souza and Debosmita Sarkar, demonstrates how India and the five European members of the G20 rank amongst the top ten G20 members in terms of overall climate performance, with India ranking first.

**Table 1:**  
**Climate Performance Index Scores for the G20 Countries**

G20 Member	Climate Action Performance Index Scores	Climate Performance Classification
India	0.76	Leaders
Italy	0.75	
Indonesia	0.72	Runners-up
United Kingdom	0.71	
Turkey	0.71	
France	0.70	
Germany	0.67	
European Union	0.66	Contenders
Mexico	0.64	
Japan	0.63	
Argentina	0.62	
Brazil	0.60	
China	0.59	Aspirants
Australia	0.46	
South Africa	0.44	
South Korea	0.44	Incipient
Russia	0.42	
United States	0.37	
Canada	0.34	
Saudi Arabia	0.29	

Source: Observer Research Foundation<sup>63</sup>

# Europe as a Natural Partner for India at the G20

Through their partnerships, India and Europe have ushered in a new era of energy diplomacy, and the EU has emerged as a crucial partner in India's quest towards sustainable development. In this regard, India and Europe demonstrate a credible example of North-South cooperation for other countries within the G20 and across the globe, highlighting the role that Europe can play in strengthening India's domestic capacity and resilience.

This is not to say that there are no limitations to this wider North-South cooperation. The Russia-Ukraine war has compelled many European countries to finance fossil fuel projects in other countries to diversify away from Russian energy, thus defaulting on some of their environmental commitments.<sup>64</sup> At the COP26 summit in 2021, the effort to phase-out coal use and fossil fuel subsidies was also weakened by India and China in a last-minute intervention—a move that was criticised by Frans Timmerman, the EU's green policy chief.<sup>65</sup> Domestically, in both India and Europe, coal consumption has only increased in the past year.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism introduced in 2021, which puts a carbon charge on imports of selected products, has been criticised by developing countries like India as a protectionist measure.<sup>67</sup> Finally, the question of climate finance continues to loom large.

“Both Europe and India can operate through consensus-based decision-making, while bringing diverse stakeholders on-board.”

# Recommendations for India-Europe Cooperation in the G20

## Reformed Multilateralism

- India and Europe could prioritise multilateral institutions that are in most urgent need of reform, beginning with the UN, and in particular, the veto power and composition of the Security Council.
- The Russia-Ukraine war has sufficiently demonstrated the costs of an ineffective multilateral system. The EU should advocate for India and representations from Africa and Latin America to have permanent seats at the UN Security Council, as a first tangible step towards reforming multilateralism. (France and Britain have repeatedly expressed their support for India's permanent seat, and Germany, alongside India, is part of the G4 grouping pushing for UNSC expansion).
- The next critical issue is the veto power, which is least amenable to reform but perhaps most important. Abolishing it would be difficult as the P5 will not abdicate this power. At the very least, India and Europe could negotiate provisions to overturn the veto. This could either be through agreeing to pass a resolution based on a majority count, or necessitating two vetoes to beat a majority resolution, or through a two-thirds vote in the UNGA. Moreover, as ideated by Germany, the use of the veto should be justified by the country in question though an explanation provided to the UNGA. This middle-ground approach could be more amenable to consensus.
- India and European members of the G20 can create a combined initiative to push the needle on UN reforms using the 'New Orientation for a Multilateral System' (NORMS) proposal by India as a foundation,<sup>68</sup> and strive for consensus within the G20. If this is irreconcilable given the polarisation in the G20, they can attempt to harmonise positions with like-minded countries through an issue-based plurilateral arrangement themed around multilateralism, and then further expand the arrangement to bring in other countries. The European Commission could also put forward the same proposal to the Council of the EU to arrive at consensus between the 27 EU member states.

# Recommendations for India-Europe Cooperation in the G20

- India and European members are already engaging through the Think20 (T20) - the Ideas Bank engagement group of the G20, which has a task force dedicated to facilitating dialogue on the theme of reformed multilateralism.<sup>69</sup> The proposals put forward by the Task Force and the points mentioned in the upcoming T20 Communiqué should be translated into action.
- The two can also engage in regular institutionalised dialogue on multilateralism, building on from the ones they already have on other policy areas such as climate change and maritime security. This would maintain the momentum in conversations on the issue of multilateralism.
- Finally, the reforms that they propose should take place through textual negotiations and crucially, within a set timeframe. The upcoming UN Summit of the Future in 2024 and the subsequent 80th session of the UN General Assembly in 2025, as well as future G20 summits, could be opportunities to evaluate progress.

## **The Russia-Ukraine war**

- It would be valuable for India to harness the strengths of its diplomacy corps that has, through effective dialogue, communicated India's neutral stance on the war while preventing the EU-India partnership to be held hostage by this position. India can leverage the wider progress achieved through the India-EU partnership and use this to encourage discussions with European G20 members on the global effects of the war, while facilitating a genuine peace process between the key stakeholders towards a path of reconciliation.
- India should make use of its enhanced bilateral ties with Germany, Italy and France—whose status as primary economies accord them great influence within the EU—to carve out a G20 policy on the war. This could be the most laudable deliverable of India's G20 presidency, while also helping to avert some of the criticism hurled in India's direction around its commitment towards a rules-based order.<sup>70</sup>



# Recommendations for India-Europe Cooperation in the G20


## Climate change and energy transition

- Push for deliberations on the involvement of the private sector in climate finance, since governments alone cannot meet gaps in funding. The developed world had pledged US\$100 billion annually from 2020 to help developing countries, but they have yet to fulfil these pledges. According to estimates, India needs US\$2.3 trillion to meet its climate targets, and Europe needs €180 billion (approx. US\$195 billion) annually until 2030.<sup>71</sup>
- Create mechanisms to fund energy transitions, which would include financial support from developed countries to direct private capital towards these efforts.
- Use the experiences of India-EU cooperation, and advocate for collaboration and North-South partnerships in the areas of technology transfers and finance flows.
- Push the G20 towards developing a consensus around the role of nuclear energy.
- Utilise their cooperation on innovation on newer technologies such as green hydrogen through the EU-India Green Hydrogen Forum and India's National Hydrogen Mission to develop a joint global ecosystem for these technologies with the rest of the G20 members.

The EU-India Strategic Partnership is underpinned by the rhetoric of ‘shared values’, yet the two have struggled to translate these values to common action. India’s G20 presidency presents a unique opportunity at a critical global juncture. India’s cooperation with Europe could be a force for global good, while bolstering India’s ability to steer its agenda in a particular direction and strengthening the G20’s credibility and effectiveness.

India-Europe cooperation could act as a petri-dish for wider North-South cooperation, rather than the two pitting themselves against each other. If despite their disparities, the two manage to forge common ground, this North-South synergy has the wider potential to mitigate some of the differences that plague disparate G20 nations and hinder progress towards common solutions in a multipolar world.

India and Europe should seize the opportunity of India’s G20 presidency, and go beyond paying lip service to airy ambitions and exhibit genuine political will and commitment. At the same time, cooperation at the G20 could be a catalyst in advancing the EU-India partnership, while fulfilling some of the pledges made and taking forward their bilateral agendas relating to green energy and other areas.

India’s and Europe’s approaches to challenges may differ, yet their visions are essentially similar. This should be the central idea driving future cooperation, while focusing on particular policy areas where their collective efforts can produce maximum impact. As EU High Representative Joseph Borrell emphasised, “In a world of disorder, Europe needs partners.”<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the same is true for India. India-Europe collaboration can bring experience, capacity, responsibility, leadership and legitimacy towards addressing developmental needs and global challenges. 

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