

**Disinterest and resistance:  
Explaining the limited development of EU-India cooperation**

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**Abstract**

Despite frequent declarations of a shared commitment to combating climate change, EU-India cooperation in this area has been limited. This paper seeks to explain this outcome by exploring the disconnect between the respective ways in which India and the EU have framed climate change, and the problematic nature of the broader EU-India relationship. Since 2005 in particular, the EU has sought increasingly the participation of so-called “major emitters”, including large developing countries like India, in a future climate agreement. The Indian government, for its part, has framed global climate governance in terms of equity and the need for developed countries to reduce their GHG emissions. The paper contrasts these competing frames, highlighting the growing divergence between Indian and European interpretations of responsibility, and also places the development of bilateral engagement on climate change in the context of the broader EU-India relationship, which continues to be characterised by mutual neglect. The paper then explores how these factors combine to explain what remains a constrained climate change “partnership” between the EU and India.

## 1. Introduction

The story of EU-India engagement on climate change has been one of initially strong resistance on the Indian side followed by a gradual increase in cooperation since 2008. Nonetheless, the relationship remains quite problematic and this paper seeks to explain why this has been the case, and to examine why the Indian Government react with such resistance to EU engagement.

Attempted EU engagement with India on climate change has occurred in a context of growing concern over the rising contribution of emerging powers to global environmental degradation. India is increasingly categorized as a “major emitter” of greenhouse gases, and accounted for approximately 5.8 percent of global emissions in 2011, making it the world’s fourth largest emitter in aggregate terms. However, India’s per capita emissions are still very low compared to those of industrialized countries. Indian policy-makers and commentators therefore reject the label of “major emitter”.

Nonetheless India is also highly vulnerable to anticipated impacts of future climate change. Himalayan glaciers are retreating with major anticipated consequences for the Indian population that relies on run-off water from the glaciers. Sea level rise is also likely to impact India severely, as are changing patterns of precipitation and temperature, which are projected to have a major impact on agriculture—which supports the livelihood of 2 out of every 3 Indians. Thus, India is likely to be severely adversely affected by future projected climate change impacts.

For these reasons, India arguably has conflicted interests when it comes to the issue of climate change. This set of interests has conditioned the way in which the Indian government has framed its approach to domestic and international policy, and the EU’s attempts to engage with the Indian government in this area. This paper explains the limited development of EU-India cooperation on climate as a function of the conflicting normative frames and conceptions of material interests of each side, and of the problematic nature of the broader EU-India relationship.

By doing so, the paper contributes to the very limited existing literature on EU-India relations. Compared to EU relations with other major powers, notably the US and China, relatively little has been written about the EU-India relationship. This corresponds to the fact that, empirically, the EU-India relationship is not nearly as broad or deep as the EU relationships with those countries. Several of the books on EU-India relations have taken the form of edited volumes and collections of conference presentations, mostly funded by the European Commission or European foundations (Chopra 1998; Jain 2002, 2007), though some recent contributions have made more substantive and analytical contributions (Khandekar 2011; Peral and Sakhuja 2012; von Muenchow-Pohl 2012; Wülbers 2011, 2008). Moreover, there has been very little indeed written on EU-India relations on climate change and energy issues in particular (exceptions include Sinha 2012; Torney 2012; Upadhyay 2012; and Wagner 2012).

The next section sets out the analytical tools that will be used to explain the EU-India relationship, drawing on the literature on norm diffusion. Sections 3 and 4 discuss, respectively, the European and Indian framings of global climate governance, and the reasons underpinning their divergent approaches. Section 5 builds on this by showing how cooperation on areas of seemingly mutual interest has been inhibited. Section 6 then discusses the somewhat problematic nature of the broader EU-India relationship. This factor, along with the divergence of framings and the initial inability of the EU to frame its engagement with India in a manner that resonated with Indian interests, combine to explain the limited development of the EU-India relationship, which is analysed in Section 7.

## **2. Analytical tools to explain the EU-India relationship on climate change**

The literature on norm diffusion provides a useful starting point for analysing the EU-India relationship on climate change. It highlights how, in order to be successfully incorporated by domestic actors in the “target” state, new norms need to resonate with prior domestic conceptions of interest and normative frames. First, as Risse-Kappen notes, international norms should be “compatible with the worldviews embedded in the political culture or held by those powerful enough to

build winning coalitions” (Risse-Kappen 1994: p 212). Relevant actors must be open in principle to incorporating new ideas. If they are not, new ideas are unlikely to gain traction domestically. This, in turn, is a function of the extent to which new ideas are perceived to support important domestic material interests (Cortell and Davis 2000). Perceptions of material interests can change over time, but the point is that international norms are more likely to gain traction domestically if they are perceived to support existing perceptions of the material interests of relevant domestic actors and do not contradict these perceived interests. If new ideas strongly contradict pre-existing material interests, it is reasonable to expect that those new ideas will not gain traction with domestic actors. If, on the other hand, new ideas are perceived to support the material interest of domestic actors, this is not in itself sufficient for domestic impact, but it creates conditions in which international ideas are more likely to gain domestic traction.

It is also important that externally-promoted norms and ideas resonate with pre-existing domestic normative frames (Cortell and Davis 2000). A frame is “a persuasive device used to ‘fix meanings, organize experience, alert others that their interests and possibly their identities are at stake, and propose solutions to ongoing problems” (Payne 2001: p 39). The extent to which the normative frame used is consistent with pre-existing normative frames in the target state is likely to have a significant bearing on whether the new norm is incorporated. In this respect, domestic norms shaping the preferences of actors should offer a guide to the degree to which international norms will resonate at the domestic level (Checkel 2005). International norms that conflict significantly with pre-existing domestic norms are unlikely to have domestic impact.

Of course, the issue of resonance between international norms and domestic norms, identities, and interests should not be viewed in static terms. Interests, identities, and norms can and do change, and indeed an influential strand of the literature on norm diffusion has focused on the ways in which “norm entrepreneurs” seek to construct cognitive frames for new norms that resonate with broader public understandings (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Payne 2001). Others have emphasized the agency of

local actors in the target state. In this view, norm-takers can seek to “localize” international norms by building congruence between existing domestic norms and new international norms (Acharya 2004). The extent to which the agents of diffusion are perceived as credible is also important. In this context, to what degree is the EU perceived to have internalized domestically the norms it is trying to diffuse. In other words, does the EU “practice what it preaches” rather than projecting an idealized version of itself (Nicolaïdis and Howse 2002; and Scheipers and Sicurelli 2007)? The literature on the EU climate leadership has been surprisingly silent on this question, though one recent contribution has begun to address this deficiency (Parker and Karlsson 2010).

Focusing on conscious attempts to frame new norms and ideas raises the question of whether and to what extent the EU sought actively to frame its engagement with India on climate change in terms that would be more likely to resonate with relevant domestic actors in India. Bicchi, for example, argues that EU external action has been motivated by the idea that “our size fits all”, that Europe’s experience is a lesson for everybody, and she suggests that “much of the EU’s action can be characterized as an unreflexive attempt to promote its own model because institutions tend to export institutional isomorphism as a default option” (Bicchi 2006: p 287). A supplementary question concerns how the EU responds to resistance to its attempts to engage third countries. In particular, what happens when the norms and ideas being spread do not resonate with the target state? How does the EU respond to resistance and contestation to its attempts at diffusing ideas? As Börzel and Risse note, the literature on EU norm diffusion has paid little attention to how the EU responds to contestation and resistance on the part of target-state actors (Börzel and Risse 2009: p 11).

### **3. The European framing of global climate governance**

Countries have differed with respect to a variety of aspects of global climate governance. For example, one controversial issue concerns the extent to which policies and actions should focus on mitigation or adaptation. Historically, the UN climate negotiations have focused more on mitigation than adaptation, partly out of

fear that an emphasis on adaptation would lessen the urgency attached to mitigation. Indeed, Pielke has argued that adaptation was a “taboo” subject in the early years of the negotiations (Pielke 1998). This balance has arguably shifted in recent years, and the Bali Road Map placed adaptation and mitigation on an equal footing (UNFCCC 2008). India has argued strongly for greater priority to be devoted to adaptation, which was particularly evident at COP-8 in New Delhi in 2002. The EU has, historically, focused more on mitigation than adaptation, but this began to change somewhat during the 2000s and in its relations with developing countries, the EU increasingly has sought to integrate a focus on climate change—including adaptation issues—into the broader context of its development assistance programmes (European Commission 2003).

However, some of the most significant divergences between the EU and India relate to the issues of equity and differentiation. The European position has generally supported the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” set out in the UNFCCC of 1992, but has argued that the differentiation between Annex I (industrialized) and non-Annex I (developing) countries should evolve over time. Over much of the period since the first negotiations on climate change in the early 1990s, the EU generally took the view that industrialized countries should undertake domestic emissions reductions. The European interpretation differentiation involves strong action by developed countries to reduce their emissions in the short term, along with eventual commitments on the part of developing countries once their emissions and economic development reached a certain level. In other words, the European position supports the concept of “evolution” of the responsibilities of non-Annex I countries, under certain conditions. The EU sought to bring up the question of developing country participation on a number of occasions, for example in 1995, but this was always strongly resisted by India, China, and other developing countries.

Around 2005, the EU became increasingly concerned with the growth of emissions from large developing countries. This was driven partly by broader international concern with the projected contribution of the developing world to future emissions

growth (see, for example, International Energy Agency 2004, 2007). This was reflected in the European Commission's January 2005 communication, *Winning the Battle Against Climate Change* which flagged "broadening international participation" –including by large developing countries– as a key EU goal for the international climate negotiations. It argued that "[t]he importance of broadening international participation in efforts to tackle climate change cannot be overestimated". While this statement was partly aimed at the United States, the document noted specifically that developing countries' share of global emissions would rise to more than 50 percent in the coming decades (European Commission 2005).

The March 2007 European Council, which agreed the EU's headline climate and energy targets for 2020, highlighted the increasing share of global emissions from developing countries, and "the need for these countries to address the increase in these emissions by reducing the emission intensity of their economic development, in line with the general principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" (European Council 2007: p 13). In 2008, in preparation for COP-14 in Poznan, EU environment ministers stipulated that industrialized countries should reduce their emissions by 25–40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, and by 80–95 percent by 2050. On the issue of developing country commitments, the Conclusions stated:

Developing countries as a group, in particular the most advanced among them, would have to reduce their emissions by 15 to 30 % below business as usual, respecting the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (Council of the European Union 2008: p 6).

Differing perspectives on responsibility and differentiation are underpinned, in turn, by different ways of accounting for global greenhouse gas emissions. This is due to the fact that the distribution of shares of cumulative historical emissions between countries and regions contrasts markedly with the distribution of shares of current

emissions. While the EU accounts for over one-quarter of historical emissions up to 2002, it accounted for just 11 percent of global emissions in 2011. The EU has tended to favour the status quo emissions accounting rules, which focus on aggregate emissions at the national level, current-day rather than accumulated historical emissions, and emissions associated with production rather than consumption. Furthermore, the base year for emissions limitation targets under the Kyoto Protocol—1990—is very favourable to EU emissions levels, since EU emissions declined significantly over the course of the 1990s for reasons that had little or nothing to do with climate change policy.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. The Indian framing of global climate governance

Climate change is still viewed by the Indian Government very much through a North-South lens. India's approach to climate change—and to global environmental change and its governance more generally—can be traced back to Indira Gandhi's speech to the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. In that speech, she defended the right of developing countries to pursue economic development, describing poverty as “the greatest polluter”. She also challenged the emerging discourse in industrialized countries that the root of environmental degradation was excessive industrialization, overpopulation, and economic growth (All cited in Sengupta 2010: p 2). The primacy attached to development and poverty eradication has not changed significantly, nor has the importance the Indian Government attaches to equity at the international level.

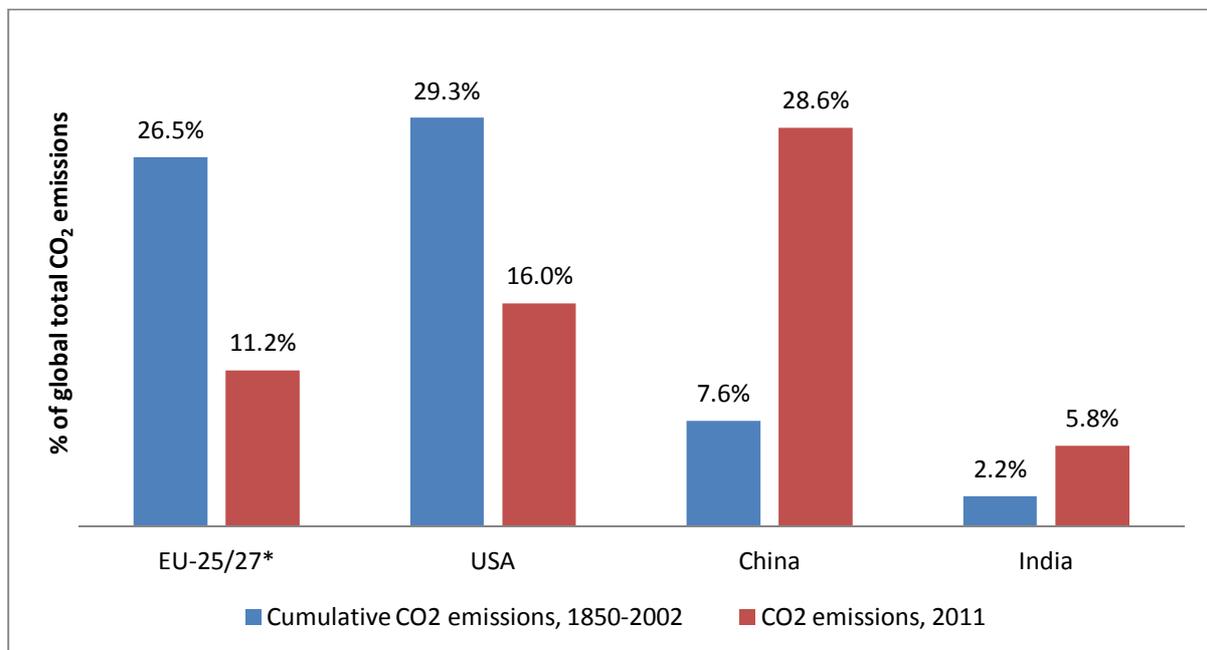
The Indian Government has placed a very strong emphasis on the principle of equity in its approach to climate change policy. This position is underpinned by India's comparatively low current level of per-capita emissions which, at 1.6 metric tonnes in 2011, are significantly lower compared with China (7.2 tonnes), the EU-27 (7.5 tonnes), and the United States (17.3 tonnes) (Olivier *et al.* 2012: pp. 33-34). Moreover,

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<sup>1</sup> Principally, these were (i) the collapse of heavy industry in East Germany and the countries of Central Europe that would later join the EU, as a result of the fall of Communism; and (ii) the “dash to gas” in the UK in the aftermath of the closure of coal mines by then-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, which resulted in a significant fall in UK emissions due to the fact that gas is a less carbon-intensive fuel than coal.

there is an important temporal dimension. If we are interested in the flow of current emissions, then India is arguably a “major emitter” in aggregate—though not in per capita—terms, but if we consider the stock of accumulated emissions since the beginning of the industrial revolution, India cannot reasonably be labelled a “major emitter”, even in aggregate terms. By comparing cumulative (1850-2002) emissions with 2011 emissions, Figure 1 illustrates how different the world looks depending on which measure we use to allocate responsibility for global greenhouse gas emissions. Based on India’s low emissions profile, the Indian Government maintained for many years that it bore no obligation to reduce or limit its greenhouse gas emissions.

**Figure 1: Cumulative and 2011 emissions for selected “major emitters”**



**Sources:** Baumert *et al.* (2005: p 32) for 1850–2002 data; Olivier *et al.* (2012: p 33) for 2009 data.

\* Data for 1850–2002 is for EU-25, while data for 2009 is for EU-27.

Indeed, it is noteworthy that in India’s *National Environmental Policy 2006*, climate change received relatively little attention—less than two pages in a 52-page policy document. Moreover, while this document acknowledged the potential negative impacts arising from climate change, it clearly stated: “Any constraints on the emissions of greenhouse gas by India, whether direct, by way of emissions targets,

or indirect, will reduce growth rates” (Ministry of Environment and Forests 2006: p 42). In short, the long-standing framing of responsibility for climate change by the Indian Government has held that industrialized countries bear historical responsibility for climate change and therefore have a responsibility to reduce their emissions, while developing countries should be granted an equitable share of “carbon space” in order to pursue their development objectives. While the announcement of a carbon intensity target by the Indian Government in December 2009 indicates a move away from a very strict adherence to this position, this development took place at the very end of the period of this study.

Second and related, the Indian Government has insisted on the primacy of development, and that tackling climate change cannot come at the expense of its right to develop. In 2007, India’s per capita GDP (purchasing power parity adjusted) was USD 2,800, and the World Bank has estimated that between 0.3 and 0.6 percent of the Indian population would be considered “middle class” by US standards in 2005 (Fujiwara 2010: p 1). Moreover, the Indian population is still predominantly rural, with only 27.2 percent of living in urban areas in 2005. However, India is rapidly urbanizing, and by 2030 it is projected that 45.8 percent of the population will live in urban areas (Madan 2006). This central emphasis on the primacy of development has been expressed frequently in Indian Government statements of policy. For example, India’s *Initial National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* set out the core principles of India’s national approach:

The principal objective of the national development strategy is to reduce the incidence of poverty to 10 per cent by 2012 and provide gainful employment ... Achieving these development priorities will require a substantial increase in energy consumption ... and consequent rise in GHG emissions (Government of India 2004: p xiv).

Similarly, the 2006 *Integrated Energy Policy* produced by the Planning Commission stated:

India needs to sustain an 8% to 10% economic growth rate, over the next 25 years, if it is to eradicate poverty and meet its human development goals ... India needs, at the very least, to increase its primary energy supply by 3 to 4 times and, its electricity generation capacity/supply by 5 to 6 times of their 2003–04 levels (Planning Commission 2006: p xiii).

These quotes illustrate the close connection between the development imperative and the issue of access to energy. This connection stems from the fact that, in India, more than 75 percent of rural and 22 percent of urban households have no access to modern forms of energy and rely on biomass (Dadwal 2010: p 1). In numerical terms, more than 400 million people do not have access to electricity, and more than 700 million depend on non-commercial biomass for cooking (Fujiwara 2010: p 4). For this reason, primary energy demand in India is rising fast: it rose by 68 percent over the period 1990 to 2005, and is likely to continue to grow rapidly, given these currently low levels of access to energy. Thus, solving development challenges in India over the coming decades will lead to an unavoidable rise in energy consumption and, therefore, greenhouse gas emissions. As an Indian NGO representative argued:

Not fulfilling those objectives is not a choice, and I don't think anybody in the world could say that you shouldn't overcome these deficits.<sup>2</sup>

The Indian Government's focus on equity, and its emphasis on India's right to develop, have driven it to defend a strict interpretation of the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility" in the international climate negotiations, and to resist emissions targets for developing countries. The Indian Government has often framed attempts by industrialized countries to persuade developing countries to accept emission limitation commitments as "environmental colonialism".<sup>3</sup> India has also strongly defended the existing binary differentiation between Annex I and non-

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Indian NGO representative, Delhi, 8 November 2010.

<sup>3</sup> This way of framing the debate about global climate change governance can be traced to a report published in 1991 by the Delhi-based NGO Centre for Science and Environment, which had a strong influence on the Indian approach to the INC negotiations in 1991–92 (Agarwal and Narain 1991).

Annex I Parties, thereby opposing the concept of “evolution” which would allow a country to “graduate” from non-Annex I to Annex I status. It has steadfastly stuck to a consistent and rigid interpretation of differentiation, and has demanded compensation from developed countries for the full incremental costs of domestic mitigation and adaptation actions, insisting that developed countries reduce their own emissions significantly (Fujiwara 2010: p 11). This framing of the distribution of responsibility for climate change has increasingly come into conflict with the predominant European framing of responsibility for climate change, as discussed above.

## 5. Areas of converging interest

Despite strongly divergent framings of global climate governance, there are nonetheless areas of potentially common interest, particularly in the realm of non-fossil energy. Indeed, India has long been at the forefront of the development of low-carbon, non-fossil energy, albeit for reasons unconnected to climate change mitigation. India depends on imported oil for up to 70 percent of its demand, a figure which is projected to increase to 90 percent by 2025, and if energy consumption follows current patterns, India is projected to run out of coal, its primary energy source, by 2045 (Madan 2006: p 14). Therefore, developing alternative energy sources is in India’s interest (Planning Commission 2006: p xiii).<sup>4</sup> Indeed, India is unusual in having had for many years a government ministry responsible exclusively for non-fossil energy sources. Originating from the oil shocks of the 1970s and a resulting drive for energy self-sufficiency, a department for non-conventional energy sources was created within the Ministry of Energy in 1982. A decade later, in 1992, as part of a broader administrative reorganization, a Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources was created, which became the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy in 2006.

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<sup>4</sup> According to the Planning Commission’s *Integrated Energy Policy* published in 2006, “Coal shall remain India’s most important energy source till 2031–32 and possibly beyond” (Planning Commission 2006).

The work of this Ministry was enhanced by the enactment of the Electricity Act in 2003, which mandated each State Electricity Regulation Commission to establish minimum renewable power purchases, allowed the Central Electricity Regulation Commission to set preferential tariffs for energy generated by renewable technologies, and made renewables a priority in rural electrification. Another state institution tasked with promoting the development of renewables is the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency, established in 1987 and tasked with providing financial support to projects and schemes generating energy through new and renewable sources and conserving energy through energy efficiency (IREDA 2011). Energy efficiency and conservation is another area which has been an Indian Government priority for some time. Under the Energy Conservation Act of 2001, a Bureau of Energy Efficiency was established in March 2002, tasked with promoting energy efficiency in areas of market failure.<sup>5</sup>

Because of Indian interest in developing alternative sources of energy and generally increasing energy supply, and because the EU has acted as a pioneer to some extent in this area, we might expect the Indian Government to be receptive to EU engagement, particularly in areas where the EU has progressed further in the development of low-carbon technologies and policies. However, the connections between the goals of energy access and climate mitigation have been framed in strikingly different ways by the EU and India, leading to significantly different world-views. It was explained by a senior Indian Government official in these terms:

The emphasis [of Indian Government policy] ... is energy access, increasing the amount of energy, increasing the amount of energy efficiency. The main difference we have with the EU is that the primary goal of the EU is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The tools that the EU uses and the tools for our very separate goals are similar – renewables, energy efficiency, etc. But this should not blind us to the fact that the goals are different. We see climate change as a co-benefit. The EU sees enhanced

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with senior Government of India official, New Delhi, 16 November 2010.

access, etc., as a co-benefit, and that's a very sharp difference in world-views.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, a former advisor to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, made the following point with regard to the implications of climate change concerns for the development of renewables policies by the Indian Government:

June 2008 marked a slight increase of climate into our initiatives on renewables. But since development for India is the main thing on the agenda—poverty reduction and development—and energy is a vital requirement for development, we still feel that renewables can play a major role in the development process by providing additional energy.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, the emphasis in terms of policies at the domestic level is still the eradication of poverty and the expansion of energy access, with climate change “co-benefits”. This difference in framing was not well-recognized on the EU side in the early years of EU-engagement on climate change. The EU sought to somewhat unreflexively export its preferred policy approach to climate change to India. But an Indian academic expert on Indian climate change policy argued that:

The world doesn't look like the EU ... The EU hasn't found a way of talking about this subject yet in a way that really resonates.<sup>8</sup>

Another Indian academic argued similarly that the framing of climate change in Europe did not resonate with an Indian audience:

It's as if you're talking in a foreign language. The message has to be translated into a language that can be understood.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with senior Government of India official, New Delhi, 16 November 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with former advisor to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, New Delhi, 8 December 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Indian academic New Delhi, 10 November 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Indian academic, New Delhi, 8 December 2010.

This is consistent with a more general perception in India that, sometimes at least, Europe is still inclined to preach to India, and to tell India what to do. However, there has been a growing recognition by European officials of the need to frame any cooperation on climate change issues in terms of energy security or access to energy in order to get buy-in from the Indian Government. However, this has been hindered to some extent by a lack of institutional capacity on the EU side. It was only in late 2007 that the Commission assigned to its delegation in India a member of staff to work specifically on climate change and environment, despite the launch of the India-EU Initiative on Clean Development and Climate Change two years previously. Indeed, a Brussels-based official working on EU relations with India on climate change, speaking in 2010, seemed unaware of the existence of the India-EU Initiative on Clean Development and Climate Change, and claimed that the institutionalized relationship had only been launched in 2008.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps in part as a result of this lack of capacity, the relationship between the European Commission and the Indian Government has tended to be more confrontational than some of India's bilateral relationships, most prominently those with Germany and the United Kingdom.<sup>11</sup> In the words of a member state diplomat based in Delhi:

There are a number of formal mechanisms that have been created between the EU and India that, on paper, look as if they add up to a substantive set of structures for dialogue and for collaboration, but the reality is that they don't add up to anything like the level that we would like to see of either that dialogue having an influence on the policy or the politics, or that the collaboration is as transformational as potentially there is between the EU and India.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with EU official, Brussels, 27 April 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with former senior UKI diplomat, 8 November 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with member state diplomat, New Delhi, 16 November 2010.

This is arguably due to the fact that the United Kingdom and Germany have generally a much greater presence “on the ground” in India compared with the Commission, and may therefore have a better sense of the domestic Indian political and policy context. This type of capacity, in turn, affects the degree to which the European Commission has been able to frame its engagement with India in terms that resonate with Indian domestic politics and preferences.

## **6. A bilateral relationship founded on mutual neglect**

The development of EU engagement with India on climate change has also been constrained by the problematic development of the broader EU-India bilateral relationship. Rather than providing an enabling institutional environment within which the EU was able to progressively develop engagement with the Indian Government on climate change, the nature of the bilateral relationship has acted instead strongly as an inhibiting factor in the development of such engagement.

Although India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the then EEC in 1963, the EU-India relationship has been characterized by enduring problems and, indeed, by something of a mutual neglect. The EU has historically concentrated much more on its relationship with China than India. For its part, the Indian Government has concentrated first and foremost on its relations with the United States, then China, Russia, and countries in its neighbourhood, and only then Europe.

This mutual neglect has its origins in a number of related factors. First, the EU and India approach many global issues in very different ways. With regard to two dominant themes in Indian foreign policy – the nuclear control regime and terrorism emanating from Pakistan – India has been largely disappointed by the response of the EU which has not, in Indian eyes, adequately appreciated India’s concerns about its external security environment. Moreover, the two sides conceive of multilateralism in quite different ways: while the EU views it in terms of strengthening international institutions, India views the concept of multilateralism through a great power lens, with a strong emphasis on national sovereignty and a

desire to refashion some of the rules of international order according to its own preferences (Wagner 2008).

Second, these differences of approach to world politics are compounded by the fact that, on many of the issues that matter most to India, the EU is divided. Nowhere is this more evident than on the issue of United Nations Security Council reform. In the words of one EU official working on relations with India:

India are not interested [in dealing with the EU], and where they are interested, we can't deliver or we're divided: a seat on the UN Security Council, more visas for high-tech computer people from Bangalore or Mysore, and our issue on civilian nuclear cooperation. They prefer for historical and traditional reasons the bilateral approach in their relations with the EU, and obviously because of their close relationship with the UK.<sup>13</sup>

The differing approaches to world politics and the lack of unity of the EU on issues of key importance to India have contributed to a tendency of the Indian Government to treat the EU as a primarily economic rather than political actor, and to deal bilaterally with EU member states on matters of political or strategic concern. For this reason, India was described by EU officials as a "Eurosceptic" third country in the sense that it fails to see the added value of dealing with the EU on political issues, and prefers to deal with member states on a bilateral basis on matters other than trade.<sup>14</sup>

This mutual neglect and strategic disconnect provided the context for the development of the EU-India relationship in the early 21st century. The EU and India agreed in 2000 to institutionalize annual summits at head of state or government level. The establishment of a so-called "strategic partnership" a few

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with EU official, Brussels, 23 July 2010.

<sup>14</sup> This was attributed by one interviewee to the fact that India views the EU through the prism of the British media. Interviews with EU officials, Brussels, 8 and 23 July 2010. Rajendra Jain, a prominent scholar of EU-India relations, has also made the point about Indian officials being influenced by the Eurosceptic Anglo-Saxon media (Jain 2009).

years later created a false illusion of a deepening of the institutional basis of the relationship. The 2003 European Security Strategy identified India along with the United States, China, Russia, Japan, and Canada as the EU's "strategic partners", but while the EU already had extensive institutionalized relations with the other five countries, India was something of an outlier in this list (Council of the European Union 2003: pp. 13-14).

This elaboration of a "strategic partnership" provided the context within which the EU attempted to launch more sustained engagement with India on climate change. However, underlying the optimistic rhetoric of partnership and deepening engagement was a continued mutual neglect, underpinned at a general level by significantly contrasting conceptions of world politics, and by specific tensions in a range of policy areas. For this reason, the strategic partnership was arguably neither strategic nor a partnership, and can be thought of as an empty shell within which the two sides would seek to find issues on which they could cooperate on the basis of shared interest. In the context of this search for issues which could populate the emerging "strategic partnership", the UK Government played a key role in placing the issue of climate change on the EU-India agenda during its Presidency of the EU in 2005.<sup>15</sup>

## **7. Explaining the limited development of EU-India engagement on climate change**

The divergent framings of global climate governance and responsibility, and the problematic nature of the broader EU-India relationship, help to explain the pattern of cooperation between the EU and India. This was very limited at first, but has grown to some extent in the period since 2008.

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<sup>15</sup> The role of UK Presidency in this process was confirmed by a senior Commission official involved in the process at the time, with the Commission involved and supporting the United Kingdom. Interview with former senior UK diplomat, Delhi, 8 November 2010, and phone interview with senior Commission official, 30 June 2011.

### *5.1 Climate dialogue on paper: 2005-2007*

EU engagement with India has developed in the framework of the “India-EU Initiative on Clean Development and Climate Change”, agreed at the 2005 EU-India summit, under which the two sides agreed to focus on “voluntary practical measures”. Areas identified for cooperation included: (i) eliminating barriers to dissemination of technologies; (ii) increasing funding for research and development; (iii) climate change adaptation, including research and development and integration of adaptation into sustainable development strategies; (iv) reducing the cost of cleaner technologies by achieving economies of scale; and (v) strengthening implementation of the Clean Development Mechanism. Compared with the formulaic statements on climate change of earlier summit joint declarations, this was a detailed and reasonably specific statement of priorities, though there were few if any targets to be achieved. However, follow-up on these points of agreed cooperation was very limited.

The two sides agreed that the “Joint Working Group on Environment”, which had been established in 1999 but had met infrequently, would meet on a yearly basis. The Joint Working Group on Environment meets at senior official level and was envisaged as a forum in which policy objectives would be exchanged, upcoming bilateral political meetings would be discussed, and other matters—such as the topic for the Environment Forum—could be agreed. An “EU-India Environment Forum”, was intended to bring together governments, business, and civil society from each side. A number of one-off workshops and conferences were held in the period 2006–2007, including on adaptation, the Clean Development Mechanism, and climate change research needs. However, in general there was little substantive activity before 2008 (AGCC 2009; Boldt and Das 2008).

An EU-India Energy Panel was also established in 2005, involving DG Energy on the EU side and the Ministry of Power on the Indian side. It met for the first time in June 2005 and established three sub-working groups: (i) Coal and Clean Coal

Technology;<sup>16</sup> (ii) Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency; and (iii) Fusion Energy and International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER). A fourth Working Group on Petroleum and Natural Gas was established in 2006. However, although there were periodic meetings of the Energy Panel and at least some of its working groups, progress has been very limited with frustrations on both sides. According to one European official involved in the process, difficulties included resource constraints and personnel changes on the Indian side, such as the fact that the Secretary of the Indian Ministry of Power changed three times in one year.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, by mid-2010, the Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Working Group had not met for some time, and the Working Group on Coal was the only one which continued to make progress.<sup>18</sup> The lack of progress was recognized on the Indian side as well. An official at the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy reported that the Energy Panel had not made any difference to the overall development of energy policy, merely providing a “feel-good factor”.<sup>19</sup>

## *5.2 A new impetus? 2008-2012*

EU-India cooperation received fresh impetus in 2008 in the context of a broader reconsideration of the EU-India relationship that year. At the 2008 EU-India Summit, the overall EU-India Joint Action Plan was revised following a recognition that the Joint Action Plan agreed in 2005 was too ambitious, and it was scaled back in terms of action so that it was more focused on a smaller range of issues (European Union and Government of India 2008a).<sup>20</sup> As part of this process, the French EU Presidency secured agreement on a “Joint Work Programme, EU-India Co-operation on Energy, Clean Development and Climate Change” (European Union and Government of India 2008b).

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<sup>16</sup> Due to issues of institutional competence on the Indian side, the Working Group on Coal and Clean Coal was subsequently split into two separate working groups, dealing respectively with (i) coal and (ii) clean coal, because these areas are the responsibility of different ministries in India. Interview with EU official, Brussels, 16 July 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with EU official, Brussels, 16 July 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with EU official, Brussels, 16 July 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with official at the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, New Delhi, 26 November 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with EU official, Brussels, 8 July 2010.

Under the heading “cooperation on energy”, this Joint Work Programme identified coal, energy efficiency, fusion energy, and renewables as areas for cooperation, with a strong emphasis on joint research and development. Proposed cooperation under the heading of “climate change” was somewhat more limited. The two areas identified were (i) the organization of workshops on modelling mitigation options, deployment of climate-friendly technology, and the future of the Clean Development Mechanism; and (ii) the establishment of a pool of expertise to support capacity-building in India.

Under the heading “private sector cooperation”, it was proposed that European Investment Bank funding would be provided for mitigation and adaptation projects in India,<sup>21</sup> and that a proposed “European Business Technology Centre” (EBTC) would advance private sector and research cooperation. Following on from this, the EBTC was established in New Delhi with the support of the European Commission in January 2009. It was established with funding primarily from the European Commission.<sup>22</sup> Implemented by the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry (EuroChambres), it aims to provide support and advice to European businesses seeking entry into the Indian market in four sectors: energy, environment, biotechnology, and transport. Its focus is primarily on small and medium size enterprises, particularly from those EU member states without existing trade-promotion offices in India.

While the 2008 Joint Work Programme was reasonably specific in identifying particular areas for cooperation, it was in large part a re-statement of the priorities that had been identified under the 2005 Initiative on Clean Development and Climate Change. This reflected the fact that the activities set out in 2005 had, by and large, not yet taken place. As such, the activities proposed under the 2008 Joint Work

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<sup>21</sup> Following on from the Summit, in December 2008, the European Investment Bank agreed to provide a loan of EUR 150 million to the Export-Import Bank of India, two thirds of which was earmarked for projects to mitigate climate change in the renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors (European Investment Bank 2008).

<sup>22</sup> The project is funded for five years initially, with a long-term aim that the Centre will become self-sustaining.

Programme represented a continuation of the means by which the EU had sought to engage India from 2005 onwards.

The period since 2008 has seen a gradual increase in the level of cooperation on issues of energy and environmental policy, particularly in the past two years. It is noteworthy that this cooperation has not taken place under a “climate change” heading. The February 2012 EU-India summit agreed a “Joint Declaration for Enhanced Cooperation on Energy”. This outlined a range of areas for cooperation, including: clean energy, particularly clean coal and advanced coal mining; energy efficiency of products and buildings; smart grids; renewable energy innovation and deployment; energy safety, particularly nuclear safety and off-shore drilling safety; and fusion energy (EU Delegation to India 2012b). In November 2012, the 6th EU-India Environment Forum was held in focused on the themes of sustainable forestry and biodiversity (EU Delegation to India 2012a).

However, the relationship has continued to be characterised by some tensions, perhaps most visibly over the decision by the EU to include international aviation from the beginning of 2012 in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS). In February 2012, India and 22 other countries agreed the “Declaration of the Moscow Meeting on Inclusion of International Civil Aviation in the EU-ETS” rejecting the EU’s move as unilateral and called on it to reverse its decision (IISD 2012). In November 2012, EU Climate Commissioner Connie Hedegaard announced that the EU would “stop the clock” on the inclusion of aviation in the EU ETS for one year to allow for multilateral negotiations in the framework of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (DG Climate Action 2012).

## **8. Conclusion**

Although there has been some improvement in recent years, the EU-India relationship has not delivered on its potential and, particularly in the period before 2008, was characterised by significant resistance on the part of the Indian government. This paper has sought to explain this pattern of engagement and resistance as a function of both competing framings of global climate governance

and the nature of the broader EU-India relationship. While the EU has become increasingly concerned with securing the participation of large developing countries in a future climate agreement, the Indian Government has framed the climate issue as one which India has no significant responsibility to address. It was not a significant priority issue for the Indian Government, which has been far more concerned with economic development and poverty eradication. This significant “normative gap” between India and the EU has grown over time as European policy-makers have increasingly moved to conceptualize India as a “major emitter” of greenhouse gases. This has inhibited cooperation in areas where mutual interests seem to exist, such as non-fossil energy.

Furthermore, the bilateral relationship on climate change was constrained significantly by the troubled development of the broader EU-India relationship. Neither side is the other’s main external priority or point of reference in world politics, and there has been a wide disconnect across a broad range of policy issues, including security and terrorism, nuclear proliferation, UN Security Council reform, and conceptions of multilateralism and sovereignty. Disagreement across this range of issues, and the inability of the EU to deliver on matters of such central importance to India, has led the Indian Government to treat the EU as primarily an economic actor and to deal with individual member states rather than the EU as an entity in itself.

These factors have combined to constrain significantly EU-India engagement on climate change. This was particularly the case prior to 2008. Although the EU has to some extent succeeded in finding ways of engaging with India that resonate better with Indian interests and normative frames in the period since then, the relationship remains contested and has not delivered as much as the EU’s engagement with many of its other “strategic partners”.

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