

## **EU and India: Emerging Partners in the Indo-Pacific**

Authors

**Dost Muhammad Barrech**

Research Associate, India Study Centre (ISC) the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad.

**Misbah Mukhtar**

Research Associate, India Study Centre (ISC) the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad.

**Abstract:** *This descriptive research aims at identifying emerging trends in the growing EU and India partnership and analyzes how it will affect the new chessboard of great powers in the Indo-Pacific region. Analyzing EU-India Global Infrastructure Deal, The EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025, and the EU's Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, this paper contends that the EU, India, and even the US are formulating alliances to counter China's growing influence in the region. However, their efforts are far from bearing any fruitful result due to the economic size of China's Belt Road Initiative (BRI). Moreover, the financial stakes of the EU countries with China and the lack of lucrative alternatives to BRI are also contributing factors for the failure of any such designs.*

**Keywords:** EU, Belt Road Initiative (BRI), Blue-Dot-Network (BDN), Quad, Indo-Pacific

## **Introduction:**

The ongoing developments in the world have placed Indo-Pacific Region (IPR) at the center of unfolding geo-economic and geo-strategic competition. One of these developments is the emergence of China as a great power and its enhanced presence in the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR). Being home to the three largest economies outside the EU (China, India, and Japan) the region holds immense significance for the EU. Against this backdrop, the EU and India have announced an infrastructural deal “EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025”, to offer connectivity to various parts of the world and to preserve the rules-based international order and multilateralism. The deal is comprehensive with a special focus on areas including foreign policy, security cooperation, trade and economy, sustainable modernization partnership, global governance, and people-to-people contact. Other areas of eminence involve collaboration in cyberspace, environment, research, innovation, connectivity, and cooperation especially in the Indo-Pacific region (IPR).

Previously, the EU has already devised a Strategy of Cooperation 2020 for the Indo-Pacific region. It aims at cooperation in humanitarian crises, new free trade agreements, and upholding international law cooperation for achieving sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Indo-Pacific region. To ensure safety and stability in the region, the strategy aims at resolving security issues and contributing to the defense of the region. The EU-India Strategic Partnership is a step forward in this regard where it calls for Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and enhanced naval presence in the Indo-Pacific to counter growing Chinese presence in the region. Moreover, both the EU and India are forging alliances with third countries to formulate an alliance against China in the region. The changing landscape of the region also indicates the EU might join the Quadrilateral Security Group or Quad. All of these efforts are to contain growing Chinese influence in the region.

The United States of America is also included in the bandwagon aimed at checking China’s influence. In this regard, US President Joe-Biden has announced reviving Blue-Dot-Network (BDN), previously launched by the Trump administration in 2016 to derail China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This paper argues that despite all these efforts, both the EU and India have failed to come up with a true alternative to China’s (BRI) for nothing matches its giant economic size and the opportunities it offers to various parts of the world. It further highlights that in the absence of alternatives, all these efforts to curb Chinese political and economic influence in the region will remain short of curbing China’s growing influence. Though the EU and India are making collaborations, the EU’s naval presence in the region is negligible. Also, many countries in the EU have great economic ties with China and would not be in favor of sabotaging their relations with China. This paper argues that in the light of all these developments, the enhanced EU-India ties and their resolve to formulate collaborations with third countries will only create more polarization in the regional and global landscape.

### **The EU and India Global Infrastructure Deal**

To provide an alternative to China's BRI, the EU and India have announced an infrastructural deal offering connectivity to various parts of the world. However, both entities have agreed to explore and maximize synergies with third-world countries, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. (Peel, Fleming, & Findlay, 2021). The whole notion of expanding their interests in the region is to check the growing China's influence. President Joe Biden aims to formulate an alliance of democracies against China's increasing power. Recently, the same offer was extended to Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the UK in March to formulate infrastructural deals against BRI. (Renshaw, 2021) There is a budding strategic alliance between the EU and India and the EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025 adopted at the 15th EU-India Summit 2020 is a testimony to this claim.

### **The EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025**

To preserve the rules-based international order and multilateralism, the EU and India have devised the EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025. The idea is to develop a roadmap for the next five years for joint action between the two "unions of diversity" (European Union, 2021). It deals with notions of foreign policy and security cooperation, trade and economy, sustainable modernization partnership global governance, and people-to-people contact. Following are the key features of this roadmap:



Source: Author's work, 2021

## **FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY COOPERATION**

### **Foreign Policy:**

In foreign policy, it aims at expanding exchanges in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) to promote regional forums on mutual priorities between India-EU.

### **Security:**

In 10 points agenda about security, the partnership aims at expanding cooperation on non-proliferation, disarmament, money laundering, counter-terrorism, and cybersecurity. It aims at achieving these goals by increasing cooperation between European Naval Force and the Indian Navy. It further enlists a desire for strengthening maritime security by establishing a working arrangement between Europol and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Both EU-India is keen to work together against cybercrime too. Other areas of collaboration in the field of security involve enhanced consultation in the UN peacekeeping agenda on Women, Peace, and Security for a holistic approach to these issues. They have further vowed to collaborate in the field of Human Rights too.

## **TRADE, INVESTMENT, BUSINESS, AND ECONOMY**

In these areas, both the entities have agreed on establishing ministerial-level dialogues for bilateral trade and investments, particularly for Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) under the new roadmap. Their business and trade collaboration will further include pharmaceutical companies, the fields of biotechnology, medical services, and agriculture. Another agenda on the roadmap is engagement in intellectual property rights and their protection in the economic field.

## **SUSTAINABLE MODERNIZATION PARTNERSHIP**

Through this roadmap, both the EU and India have agreed that climate change and clean energy cooperation are needed for implementing the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) in life. In this milieu, they have agreed to work on the principles of Common but differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities. They have further agreed on Cooperation on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), ratification, and implementation of some parts of the Montreal Agreement including the Kigali Amendment and to hold meetings to limit the rise in temperature levels above 1.5 degrees in pre-industrial levels through this plan.

**Environment:** Under this futuristic roadmap, eight clauses have been agreed upon to address the issue of the environment. It includes promoting Joint Working Groups on Environment, creating a working group on EU-India Water Forum, and the EU-India Water partnership. Other areas of mutual collaboration include partnership on resource efficiency and working together in biodiversity crises.

**Urban Development:** Both EU and India have agreed upon working together on Smart Sustainable Urbanization. The idea of this venture is to promote smart and sustainable cities to promote climate action. It also incorporates effective waste management, formulating effective water supply and sewerage systems, and disaster risk reduction. It aims at formulating an online India-EU dashboard for the facilitation and implementation of such projects. Furthermore, the focus lies in increasing the investment of the European Investment Bank (EIB) for urbanization projects in India. To increase city to city pairing and enhance partnership and investment between the EU and India for the implementation of the First EU-India Urban Forum organized in 2019 are a few steps towards the same goal.

**Information and Communication Technology:** This part of the roadmap deals with ensuring open, safe, and free cyberspace by identifying common goals and formulating effective measures to achieve them. To attain this outcome, both the EU and India have agreed upon developing sustainable digital infrastructures and regulatory frameworks including convergence for ensuring the protection of personal data and for facilitation of cross-border data flows. Cooperation in developing new technologies, artificial intelligence, health tech, agritech, and quantum computing are also a few areas of this roadmap under the umbrella of information and communication technology.

**Transport:** The main aim of this clause is to ensure increased cooperation in sustainable mobility and to deploy electric vehicle charging infrastructure in both entities. It aims at arranging an EU-India Aviation Summit to strengthen the EU-India relationship in civil aviation too.

**Outer Space:** This part is to ensure a working collaboration between India and the EU to cooperate on matters related to outer space under UN frameworks. The idea is to establish a working group for space collaboration on major themes like space science, Earth observation, navigation of satellites, etc.

**Health and Security:** It involves working together for health security, pandemic preparedness, and response, especially in the backdrop of COVID-19. It is also to promote cooperation for sustainable food systems and Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) between both parties to the roadmap.

**Research and Innovation:** This part involves the resolve of renewing the EU-India Agreement on Science and Technology 2001 which has to expire in 2020. The EU-India has also declared launching "Horizon-Europe" (2021-2027) for co-investment and funding on areas of mutual interest in the field including health and bioeconomy, neuroscience, and brain research, Technology Readiness Level (TRL), and Earth Ecosystem Sciences. Furthermore, the roadmap incorporates clauses about the EU's involvement in India's Visiting Advanced Joint Research

(VAJRA) for the exchange of researchers on areas of mutual strategic interest. Collaborations for gender equality and in the field of women empowerment are also a part of this plan.

**Artificial Intelligence:** it includes working together in the field of artificial intelligence by collaborating on scientific policies and dialogues for scientific research.

## **GLOBAL GOVERNANCE**

To ensure effective multilateralism, both sides have agreed to enhance cooperation on international forums like the UN, including cooperation on UN reforms.

**Connectivity:** Through this part, they seek opportunities for connectivity between the EU and India to explore options of connection with third countries in the Indo-Pacific region. It also comes with a promise of working together on the mutually agreed principles in the G20 voluntary Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment (QII).

**Cooperation in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific:** The very fact that a specific clause is added by these parts in the roadmap depicts their significance for both the EU and India. To preserve freedom, and security in this region both the entities have agreed to converge together while abiding by the UN Convention on the Law of Seas. (UNCLOS)

**Global Economic Governance:** To strengthen a rules-based economic order both the EU and India have agreed to address the challenges of global trade in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and to collaborate in G-20 on various global issues including strong and balanced growth, fighting tax fraud and to reach agreements on the digital economy. Also, they want to work together for mobilizing private capital toward environment-friendly policies through the International Platform on Sustainable Finance (IPSF).

Moreover, under the realm of **Development partnership in third countries** both the countries have decided to launch pilot projects as trilateral or cooperation projects and have agreed on launching the EU-India Annual Review of development with third countries.

**Ocean Governance:** Both the entities have agreed to recognize the significance of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and also for enhanced cooperation on fisheries, promotion of a blue economy, and avoiding excessive fisheries through this part.

## **PEOPLE TO PEOPLE CONTACT**

**Migration and Mobility:** Both EU and India have agreed on formulating a joint comprehensive partnership for migration and mobility by increasing the exchange and mobility of students, business professionals, researchers, etc through this part of the roadmap. An important aspect of this part is the return and readmission in a country being a part of this partnership. To help each other in developing skillsets and to streamline the mobility of labor. It includes helping in issuing

visas for a certain skill set and maximizing the impact of migration by addressing human trafficking issues.

**Employment and Social Policy:**

Under this roadmap, both entities have agreed to establish an EU-India Dialogue on areas of social policy, health security, female participation in the labor market, minimum wage, sectoral cooperation, and work-life balance. They have also agreed to explore more opportunities in G20 for comprehensive issues like social protection and decent creation of jobs etc.

**Education and Culture:** This deals with increasing cooperation in cultural diplomacy. It includes cooperation in Erasmus and other educational programs and also the closer participation of EU members in academic activities in India to ensure student mobility.

**Parliament, Civil Society, and Local Decentralised Authorities:**

It includes the consensus on the regular exchange between parliamentarians and strategic think tanks.

Through **the Institutional Architecture of the EU-India Strategic Partnership**, both the parties have agreed on high-level cooperation, ministerial meetings, and exchanges. It also includes the utilization of the Policy Dialogue Support Facility of the EU, promotion of strategic partnerships through study tours to the EU and India, and the grooming of young Indian diplomats through exchange visits.

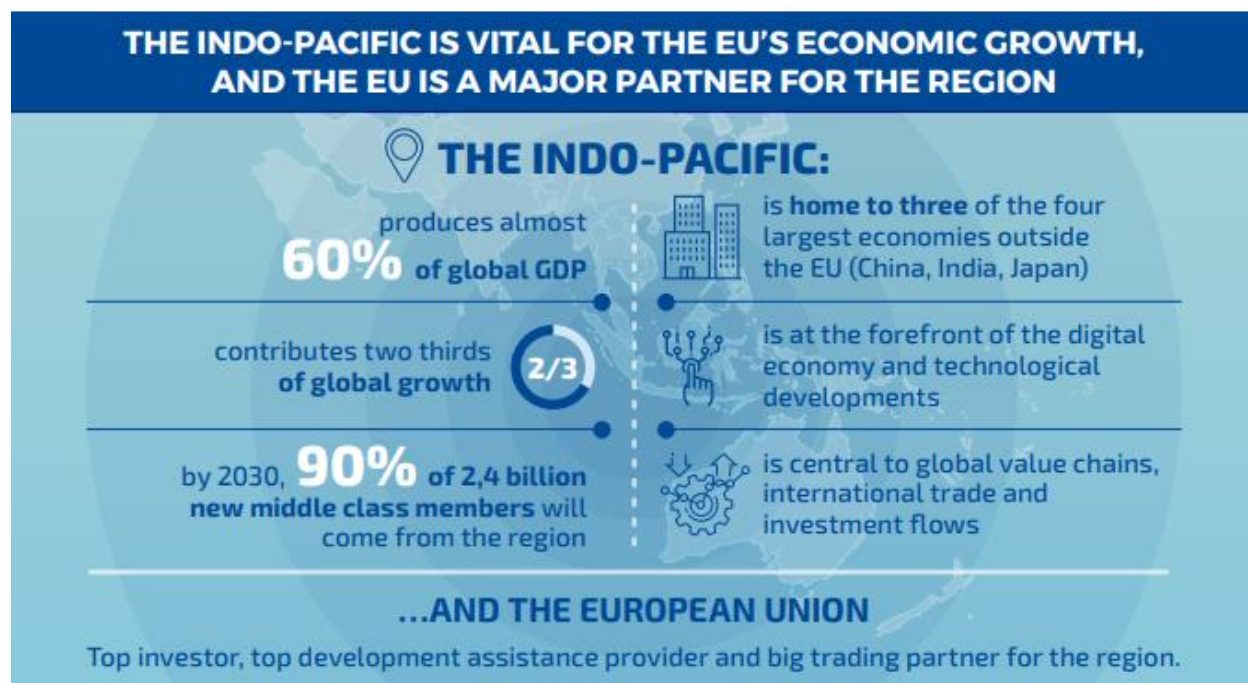
These are the salient features of this roadmap. It is pertinent to note that this roadmap does not create any legally binding obligation on both the entities and also does not entertain any financial commitments. Without any financial and legal commitments, the Roadmap is still significant for it underlines new areas of strategic interest for India and the EU. Indo-Pacific and the IORA are some of them where separate clauses have been added to the Roadmap, especially about these regions.

**The EU's geopolitical and geo-economic Interests in the Indo-Pacific**

The Indo-Pacific Region (IPR) becomes a new chessboard of growing and changing geo-economic, geopolitical, and geo-military dynamics. Developing a new strategic continuum, the Indo-Pacific region has fused two different ocean systems into a singular entity.

Indo-Pacific is important for the EU because it is considered the "world's economic and strategic center of gravity" by contributing to 60 percent of the global GDP. ((European Union External Action Section, 2021). It is estimated that by 2030 it will be home to 2.4 billion new middle-class members which holds huge significance for the global market. The region is crucial for implementing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.





Source: EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific

EU has already contributed to the region in areas including:

- Disaster risk reduction
- Development cooperation and humanitarian assistance
- Upholding international law
- Partnerships and free trade agreements
- Tackling international law
- Biodiversity loss
- Pollution

### **EU Strategy of Cooperation for Indo-Pacific**

On 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021, 27 European Nations announced their Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific (European Union External Action Section, 2021). Through this strategy, the EU intends to play a role of a cooperative partner “by bringing added-value relations with all its partners in the region” (Council of the European Union, 2021)

The new strategy aims at cooperation in humanitarian crises, new free trade agreements, and upholding international law cooperation for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It further incorporates the resolve of addressing the effects of COVID-19 in the region. It further shares a resolve of work with ASEAN and Asia Europe Meeting (AESM) and other third countries for increased cooperation. The main idea is to benefit and extend Brussel’s plans and strategic interests in the area.

Against this backdrop, it has formulated and agreed upon its own Strategy 2020 where it aims to increase cooperation in areas including:

- Ocean Governance
- Research And Technology
- Strengthening Regional Organizations
- Increasing Cooperation in Multilateral Fora
- Health
- Reinforcing work on tackling Global Challenges such as Climate Change

To ensure safety and stability in the region the strategy expresses its resolve in contributing to the security and defense of the region where the EU aims at:

- Protecting maritime routes through capacity building of partners
- Strengthening cooperation with partners on counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, crisis management, and maritime security
- Organizing joint naval exercises and port calls between the Indo-Pacific naval units and the EU counter-piracy Naval Force Operation Atalanta

Although the strategy expresses resolve to be inclusive for all and to incorporate China in it and aims to continue China- EU Comprehensive Agreement (CAI), it repeatedly uses words like “geopolitical competition”, “tensions on supply chains, and technological, political and security areas,” (Council of the European Union, 2021) as a fundamental reason for formulating such a strategy. It hints toward the rise of China as a great power and the strategic and maritime competition, its emergence poses a threat to the European powers.

Under this strategy, many European countries including the Netherlands, Germany, France, and the U.K. have vowed to increase their naval presence in the region keeping in view the changing significance and landscape of maritime affairs. The aim is to be achieved by capacity building with their partners through Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA).

### **EU-India growing Strategic Convergence in Maritime Security**

The Indian Ocean compared to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans have a greater significance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Ahmed *et al*, 2015). To counter China's increasing global maritime footprint in the Indian Ocean, both the EU and India are committed to accelerating their foothold in the region. China's Maritime Silk Road strategy connecting Europe with Southeast Asia via the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean compel India and the EU to prioritize maritime security and connectivity as a core element of their bilateral engagement. For two bona fide reasons, India's perception vis-à-vis the EU witnessed essential changes. Firstly, New Delhi has been diversifying its strategic partnership and views the EU as a bulwark against Beijing in the emerging geo-strategic and geo-economic competition. Secondly, at the domestic level, there has

been growing advocacy promoted by the Indian Navy to formulate diplomatic ties with the EU. (Kamerling&Pandit, 2019).

Improved diplomatic ties and robust maritime security with the EU will inevitably reduce India's excessive dependence on its traditional partners. The growing strategic convergence in maritime security of New Delhi and Brussels is also designed to thwart challenges of non-traditional threats such as terrorism, piracy, transnational organized crime, illegal fishing, and pollution. (Kamerling&Pandit, 2019) The EU Indo-Pacific strategy endorses “a meaningful European naval presence” (Institute of South Asian Studies, 2021). A strategic convergence between the EU and India is ascribed to promoting freedom of navigation and providing maritime security to the region. The Indian Ocean will remain a core area in bilateral maritime cooperation. The two regions of the world in 2008 have expedited cooperation in the area of anti-piracy and building capacity in the Western Indian Ocean. The first maritime naval passing took place between the EU Naval Force and the Indian Navy in October 2017. In the same way, for the first time in 2008, the ship the Indian Navy escorted World Food Programme to Somalia in support of the EU's ‘Operation Atalanta. In January 2021, both sides launched the inaugural India-EU Maritime Security Dialogue to seek mutual interests in maritime security. (Institute of South Asian Studies, 2021).

France among the EU member states has an undue preoccupation with bolstering naval power and consolidated defense partnership with New Delhi in the Indian Ocean. In May 2018, it planned the Paris-Delhi-Canberra axis. The aforementioned proposal in September 2020 headed toward the first India-Australia France dialogue on increasing cooperation in the region. For the reinforcement of the interoperability, the French and Indian navies in the Indian Ocean 1983 held the annual Varuna exercise. Most considerably, the Indian Navy for the first time in the Bay of Bengal in April 2021 joined the French-led La Pérouse naval exercise. (Institute of South Asian Studies, 2021).

Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) within the EU and India has been embedded in the policy domain of both regions. On account of the unfolding geopolitical changes in the Indo-Pacific region, where both the EU and India perceive China's assertiveness, political clout, and economic investment between the coast of Africa and the South China Sea as a grave threat to their geopolitical and geo-economic interests. In 2015 India initiated Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) aimed at promoting international maritime rules and norms peaceful settlement of maritime issues and the enhancement of maritime cooperation with Indian counterparts. While the EU is also a maritime security provider via the European Union Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) tries to address global maritime issues. (P U., n.d.). The EU considers New Delhi as a trustworthy partner to prevent Chinese military assertiveness, viewing the latter as a viable option for commercial activities, playing a pivotal role in the protection of Sea lines of communication (SLOC). Last but not the least; India is also vital for the EU in the projection of shared values of democracy in the Indo-Pacific. (Barrech, 2021)

### **The impact of EU ties with India on the region**

The diplomatic relations between the European Economic Community and India were established in the 1960s which subsequently paved the way for the establishment of the Delegation of the European Commission to New Delhi (Reuters, 2015). The Cooperation Agreement between them in 1994 proved instrumental for political and diplomatic interactions. The strategic partnership between Brussels and New Delhi was signed in 2004 meant to develop international cooperation, focusing on strengthening economic interactions, and multilateralism, and improving sustainable development (Reuters, 2015). Since 2016, the EU and India have stepped up their partnership in important strategic areas, such as sustainable development, climate change, and military-to-military dialogue through numerous joint statements and initiatives. Their trade and economics have paramount importance in the consolidation of the relationships. "In 2019-20, India's trade with the EU stood at US\$ 104.93 billion (INR 767,143 crore), comprising US\$ 53.73 billion (INR 392,820 crore) worth of Indian exports and US\$ 1.2 billion (INR 374,323 crore) of imports". (Government of India). In the current arena, policymakers of both regions have realized working together and pondering over the rapid undesirable changes emanating from uncertain US policy, particularly in the era of former President Donald Trump, foreseen crisis in liberal multilateral order and the rise of China these challenges inevitably pose a grave threat to the national interest of the EU and India.

The EU is somewhat concerned about China's BRI, the latter's BRI project creates economic, political, and security challenges for the former. The EU and India are likely to accentuate the slogans of democratic partners or like-minded partners and will rubbish China's authoritarian regime which by and large will create further rift and polarization in the region. Emmanuel Macron, French President, while speaking at the EU Summit in 2019 in Brussels articulated that it was a strategic error by letting Chinese companies access the EU strategic ports infrastructure. He further reiterated that the EU was willing to collaborate with democratic countries in the region to bridge infrastructural gaps and in a bid to provide a sustainable alternative to BRI (Indian Council of World's Affairs, 2020). Making alternatives to BRI by the EU and the US will intensify differences between China, the US, and EU-India (Indian Council of World's Affairs, 2020).

The EU imposition of sanctions on China has further deepened the rift that will certainly have a ramification for the region. There is growing speculation that the EU is likely to join the Quad or Quadrilateral Security Dialogue a group of four democratic countries: the US, India, Japan, and Australia. The primary objective of the Quad is to counter China and slow down its economic growth. Arguably, there is a convergence of interest among the Quad and the EU in the Indo-Pacific region. The inclusion of the EU in the Quad will strengthen the group that will leave no stone unturned to contain China. New Delhi has urged the EU to deploy a more assertive foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific region. (European Council of Foreign Relations, 2021). Meanwhile, Toshimitsu Motegi, Japan's foreign minister while addressing the EU's Foreign Affairs Council

tried to cajole them to advocate a joint EU strategy. (European Council of Foreign Relations, 2021)

### **How will the EU and India plan a global infrastructure deal exists with BRI?**

The EU and India are committed to building joint infrastructure projects around the world; the project is an attempt to compete with (BRI). In this regard, one EU diplomat asserted that “there is now a window of opportunity to team up and create the environment for globalization based on a partnership that would be more attractive than what China can offer,” (Michael Peel and Sam Fleming; Shah 2018). The leaders of the two regions, however, have not unveiled the criteria of the funds as yet nor did they mention the implementation of the project. In the connectivity race, the EU is unmatched with China's BRI. Before the global infrastructure deal, the EU initiated a connectivity project in Asia between 2014 and 2020 and spent 8 billion euros but the connectivity project required an estimated 1.3 trillion euros each year for the accomplishment of the infrastructure across the Asia-Pacific region. Presumably, the EU will confront the issue of economic constraints (Centre for Strategic & International Studies, 2021)

The EU appears to be a weaker side in the protection of its infrastructure due to its feeble maritime security. The EU in the last couple of decades has reduced the size of its navies, struggling to tackle security challenges in the immediate neighborhood. The EU requires ample financial support and robust maritime security in the Indo-Pacific for the infrastructure. Another big dilemma the EU has been confronting is its internal divisions. Some member states of the EU have excessive economic dependence on China and are unwilling to support any strong move against Beijing. Interestingly, Hungary, Greece, and Croatia 2016 opposed a declaration of the EU against China's maritime claims.)(Centre for Strategic & International Studies, 2021). The members of the EU are divided in the Indo-Pacific strategy. The crisis in Myanmar may further intensify worries of the EU in the Indo-Pacific region. (Centre for Strategic & International Studies, 2021)

Meanwhile, Joe Biden's administration intends to revive the Blue Dot Network BDN that previously was launched by the Trump administration in 2016 but remained inactive. The main purpose of the BDN is to derail BRI. The US state department argues that "The Blue Dot Network will be a globally recognized symbol of market-driven, transparent and sustainable infrastructure projects" (Richard JavadHeydarian, 2021). Biden is exceedingly worried about China's economic growth and its technological advancement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. “China and other countries are closing in fast. We have to develop and dominate the products and technologies of the future,” Biden warned(Richard JavadHeydarian, 2021). Biden also cautioned that China under President Xi Jinping is “deadly earnest about becoming the most significant, consequential nation in the world,” and those authoritarian superpowers “think that democracy can't compete in the 21st century”. (Richard JavadHeydarian, 2021). Two different plans of the US BDN and the EU and India plan global infrastructure deal makes it clear that the US and the

EU are not on the same page and their different plans would further cause division in international politics.

On the other hand, the BRI project is viable as Beijing would revive the original Silk Road the westward expansion of China's Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). China's robust economy enables her to carry out the BRI project single-handedly. The more the project is carried out alone, the lesser there will be ambiguities and confusion. According to Morgan Stanley "China's overall expenses over the life of the BRI could reach \$1.2–1.3 trillion by 2027, though estimates on total investments vary". (Council foreign relations, 2020) Arguably, economically and militarily China has the potential to accomplish the BRI project as the plan has a strong foundation of the previous Silk Road. Revitalizing Silk and Road would remain easy for Beijing to materialize the BRI projects. Suffice it to say that plans of the US and the EU face financial constraints and seem to be lacking foundation and the implementation of the projects. The US and the EU require allies for the accomplishment of their projects. However, allies cannot remain trustworthy all the time; the divergence of interests among them will cause a big blow to their projects.

## **Conclusion**

The EU's interest in the Indo-Pacific region has been enhanced by leaps and bounds. Brussels keenly watches the competition of the global powers in the region, impacting its national interest greatly. Brussels has three key objectives in the Indo-Pacific region: promoting diplomacy, economic interests, and addressing security challenges. The EU, resultantly, has launched "The EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025", "EU and India Global Infrastructure Deal" and "The EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific". The Indo-Pacific region has paramount importance for the EU; the region contributes 40 percent of the global GDP and has the world's fastest-growing economies. The EU is unwilling to compromise on its economic interest in the Indo-Pacific. In 2018 Europe's trade in goods with Asia reached US 1.8 trillion dollars, while Europe's Foreign Direct Investment FDI with Asia totaled US 107 billion dollars. Brussels views New Delhi as a crucial player and a bulwark against Beijing's military assertiveness, the latter is also instrumental for commercial activities for the formers in the Indo-Pacific region, protecting the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC). The shared values of democracy further converge the interests of Brussels and New Delhi.

Though the EU and India Global Infrastructure Deal is designed to counter China's BRI, the former appears to be unmatchable with the latter in the race of connectivity. Admittedly, China has set a precedent in mankind's history by initiating BRI and reviving the Silk Road. Interestingly, the EU between 2014 and 2020 spent approximately 8 billion Euros in Asia on connectivity projects. Between 2014 and 2020 an inadequate fund for connectivity required nearly an estimated 1.3 trillion Euros to carry out infrastructure across the Asia-Pacific region. However, the West appears to be directionless in the derailment of China's BRI. It is pertinent to mention here, that US president Joe Biden has also announced Blue Dot Network (BDN)

Initiative alluded to counter BRI. The US State Department terms the BDN a globally recognized icon of market-driven, transparent and sustainable infrastructure projects. It is somewhat disgusting to note that the EU and the US are going to initiate the EU and India Plan Global Infrastructure Deal and Blue Dot Network (BDN) respectively without realizing the actuality that such initiatives will further move the world towards further polarization and exclusiveness.

The EU and the US have failed to understand that the initiation of these projects with multiple partners will not reach the desired goal. Alliances in international politics are not long-lasting; states are dynamic and change their foreign policies overnight. The EU and the US should inculcate the fact that their partners are more dependent on China economically and the latter has a lesser dependency on them. To create an inclusive world order and win-win situation, both the EU and the US instead of initiating connectivity projects to counter China's BRI should cooperate with Beijing to make an inclusive world order free from confrontation and hostility. The Indian rivalry with China is a brainchild of the Great British. New Delhi should not jump on the bandwagon of the EU and the US as the decline of the West is inevitable. The 21<sup>st</sup> century belongs to Asia and China is likely to replace the US in near future. It is in the national interest of India to mend better ties with rising power and immediate neighbor China. As the saying goes "a close neighbor is better than a distant relative".

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