

The EU-India Trade and Technology Council: Deepening the Strategic Partnership

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Summary

The elevation of European Union-India ties could propel the relationship's technology partnership provided challenges are overcome.

The establishment of the European Union (EU)-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC) in 2022 marked a significant change in the relationship between Brussels and New Delhi. The TTC revealed and exemplified the importance of nascent technological partnerships that increasingly shape geopolitical influence and space, which both sides need as major power tensions rise. Consequently, a structured pact and initiative to negotiate and coordinate their strategies toward technology development and regulation would be fruitful as competition rises over technology.

Modeled loosely on the EU-United States (US) TTC, this TTC provides a structured, high-level forum for coordination across trade, technology and security domains. It reflects the mutual recognition that economic interdependence, digital transformation and geopolitical competition require closer alignment between two of the world's largest democratic and market-driven actors. Yet, for various reasons, the EU-India TTC has underperformed. However, that may change as both actors seek greater place in each other's strategic logics that has been recently marked by greater political will to advance ties, high-level visits, and a possible free trade agreement by the end of 2025.

For India, the TTC represents an opportunity to anchor its global technology ambitions within a partnership that values open markets, trusted supply chains and regulatory cooperation. India is seeking to strengthen its domestic capabilities in semiconductors, critical minerals, renewable energy and digital infrastructure, and the EU offers capital, technology depth and regulatory expertise that can help accelerate this process. At the same time, the TTC enhances India's leverage as it navigates between competing US and Chinese technological spheres.

For the EU, the TTC signals a diversification of its strategic partnerships in Asia beyond China. As European firms confront supply chain vulnerabilities and the bloc recalibrates toward 'de-risking', India emerges as a vital partner with scale, talent and a growing role in the Indo-Pacific. The TTC also enables Brussels to project its regulatory power abroad – on data governance, artificial intelligence (AI), green technologies and digital standards – while learning from India's own innovations, such as its digital public infrastructure model.

The TTC is structured around three working groups: 1) strategic technologies, digital governance and connectivity; 2) green and clean energy technologies; and 3) trade, investment and resilient value chains. This architecture ensures that discussions span both

normative and material domains – ranging from AI ethics and secure digital ecosystems to joint ventures in renewable energy, critical raw materials and supply chain diversification. So far, the TTC has conducted two high-level ministerial meetings focused on critical and emerging technologies. These discussions have covered important critical issues like AI governance, semiconductor supply chains and digital infrastructure security.

The second working group targets cooperation on renewables, hydrogen, critical raw materials and energy efficiency. Here, the EU's capital and technology can accelerate India's clean energy transition, while India's scale and market offer opportunities for EU firms. Europe brings advanced renewable technologies and capital, while India offers scale, market demand and a laboratory for clean-energy deployment. Cooperation here extends beyond economics: it enhances climate diplomacy, allowing the EU and India to push for stronger leadership on global decarbonization pathways. Joint initiatives could strengthen their global leadership in climate diplomacy, particularly ahead of COP30 in Brazil. With global economic fragmentation deepening, both sides see the TTC as a tool to diversify away from China-centric supply chains, particularly in the area of green technologies.

However, challenges remain. The EU and India differ in their approaches to data localisation, competition policy and market access. India's protectionist tendencies in certain sectors and the EU's stringent regulatory frameworks generate discord and frictions. The EU's strict rules on data protection, competition policy and AI governance clash with India's insular technology governance. Moreover, the TTC's effectiveness will depend on translating dialogue into deliverables – projects, investments and cooperative standards that tangibly shape global rules and supply chains. The lack of a broader trade accord could undermine TTC engagement and cooperation. In other words, disagreements over tariffs, market access (especially for services and agriculture) and intellectual property rights could dent the TTC's momentum. Finally, the lack of sufficient private sector involvement from the European and Indian technology ecosystems that manifests through joint projects and investment must be addressed for the TTC to effect change.

The EU-India TTC is ambitious but nascent and still experimental. Its success will depend on the ability of both sides to bridge regulatory differences, mobilise investment and deliver tangible outcomes in technology and trade. If effective, it could become a cornerstone of a burgeoning EU-India strategic partnership and a model for balancing economic security with technological innovation in a fragmented global order. For the international order, the TTC could help shape 21st-century standards for digital trade and green technologies in line with open democratic values.

That said, the TTC underscores a broader convergence: both the EU and India aspire to greater strategic autonomy. By aligning trade and technology cooperation, the EU and India can reinforce an open, rules-based order while hedging against overdependence on any single partner. If successful, the TTC could evolve into one of the most consequential platforms in shaping the contours of the global digital and green transformation.

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