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The EU and India: Strategic partners but not a strategic partnership

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Introduction

This paper examines the extent to which the emergence of India as a putative major power has stimulated an increased interest in the development of the relationship between the European Union and India. The European Union has pursued a diplomacy with India (Bava 2008; Abhyankar 2009; Sachdeva 2009; Wagner 2008; Khandekar 2011; Novotny 2011; Wulbers 2011), based on its well established conception of a strategic partnership, for nearly a decade but success has been elusive for a variety of reasons examined below. This is in sharp contrast to the success that the United States has experienced, under both Republican and Democratic administrations, in pursuing a robust diplomacy focussed in particular, but not exclusively on security concerns. (Feigenbaum 2010; Von Muenchow-Pohl 2012) In recent years the EU has had to contend with assertive Indian positions on trade and climate change and on the rightful position and status of India in the evolving structures of global governance – both formal and informal (Mohan 2006; Stephens 2009a; Wagner 2010; Keukelaire and Bauyninckx 2011; Muherjee and Malone 2011). This paper examines some of the reasons for the EU's relative lack of success in developing a 'major power' dialogue (strategic partnership) with India and goes on to consider what impact if any the new external relations institutions and procedures established by the Lisbon Treaty might have on the EU's performance as a strategic partner for India in the emerging global and regional arenas that they both seek to operate within.

The Changing International Environment

The structure of the international system has been changing since the end of the cold war and it has presented many challenges to established actors and emerging powers alike (Renard and Biscop 2012). The EU's biggest initial challenge was to respond to the enormous pressure for enlargement following the 'liberation' of eastern Europe and the breakup of the Soviet Union whilst for India it was the loss of the Soviet Union as a

formidable ally and the rapid advancement of China (Mohan 2006; Wagner 2010; Ciorciari 2011). The EU successfully incorporated the eastern European states into the Union in 2004 and 2007 although, with the exception of the Baltic states, relations with the rest of the former Soviet Union and especially with Russia remain problematic as it seeks to ensure stability in its immediate neighbourhood whilst the enlarged EU has struggled to develop a new relationship with India and the other emerging powers as well as to extract continuing value from its longstanding relationship with the United States. India has more severe security concerns in its immediate region of South Asia where the rise of China provides an attractive counter balance for most of India's immediate neighbours. The EU has made little attempt to address India's new concerns in the changing international environment in stark contrast to the United States which has sought to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by India's necessarily changed relationship with the Soviet Union and its major successor state Russia.

Although the European Union has made significant efforts in the last decade to add a security dimension to its considerable economic and lesser political power it remains essentially an 'economic giant and a military dwarf' still punching significantly below the weight that its combined military assets might suggest. For India it is the 'hard power' potential of the United States and its attendant political influence that is of interest especially in relation to its security concerns about the rise of China. The EU remains an important economic trading partner of India but even here the EU's soft power potential is seen as a declining concern for India as trade levels fall in comparison to other parts of the emerging system.

The EU remains an important source of military equipment for India but shows no signs of becoming a significant military power in an international military system dominated globally by the hyper power of the US and, for the Indians, regionally by China. The international political economy is more diversified with a mixed bag of actors seeking to participate in the global governance of the system in structures whose domination by the 'western powers' is clearly no longer appropriate - hence the two fold move upwards to the newly established G20 which includes India and the other emerging powers and downwards towards the unofficial G2 which involves just the US and China. In both cases the relative power of the EU is diminished. If the global military system remains structured around the predominant military power of the US and the international

economic system by the US and China then the international political system has become ever more multipolar such that some write about an emerging world of nonpolarity (Haas 2008) with a number of 'powers' seeking to exploit both hard and soft power as well as a variety of combinations of the two so as to exert political influence on a variety of issues from climate change to human rights or from trade to the governance of cyberspace at both the global and regional level. Even here though it is hard to find particular global issues where the EU and India might profitably seek to work together

It is this emerging world that provides the structural context for this paper which seeks to examine the growing relationship between a group of 'old powers' collectively reconstituted within the European Union as a potential major power and India, one of an essentially incoherent group of emerging major powers which also includes Russia (which is perhaps best thought of as re-emerging), China (which many would argue has already emerged), and Brazil (these four are collectively known as the BRICs) but which is often extended to include South Africa, Indonesia, Japan and others. In this system the EU continues to be regarded as a major 'soft power' actor with an established but declining role in the world trade system, with a global currency that is increasingly internally challenged and with projected growth rates of at best 2-5% which, after the financial crisis, remain significantly below the 8-10%+ experienced by the likes of India and China in recent times (although these two are also suffering but to a lesser extent in the current global economic crisis). The EU struggles to maintain the military resources necessary to match its economic resources if it is to continue to play a significant role in its immediate region whilst India has demonstrated a clear intention since the end of the cold war to exert influence first of all in its immediate region of South Asia, then more widely in Asia and the wider world. India is capable of deploying 'hard' power as well as 'soft' power in a system that continues to demonstrate competitive 'modern' characteristics rather than cooperative 'post-modern' characteristics that would better suit the EU's preferred method of interacting. Whilst the EU has in recent years sought to make the most of its post-Westphalian characteristics (an internal permanent peace amongst its constituent states and a collective ability to develop EU governance structures without creating a European government) India and almost all the other established or emerging powers remain rather firmly 'Westphalian' in their nature and outlook. Thus whilst India is happy to be considered as a great democracy sharing certain values with both the European Union

and the US it also jealously guards its sovereignty and is deeply suspicious of and resistant to the EU's apparent enthusiasm both for external democracy promotion and 'intervention' in the affairs of others. Despite India's dislike of authoritarian systems of government it remains most likely to side with China and Russia in opposing EU efforts to push the global community into either economic sanctions or armed intervention in Libya or Syria.

In recent years the EU has nevertheless sought to enhance its global presence (Renard and Biscop 2011) partly by establishing 'strategic relationships' or partnerships with other Powers to complement its initial success in seeking partnerships with other regional organisations such as ASEAN or MERCUSOR. The EU has negotiated a complex set of bilateral strategic agreements most of which are underpinned with increasingly detailed and wide ranging action plans without ever successfully creating either the institutional base at the EU level or convincing political will amongst its major member states to make the notion of a strategic relationship meaningful. India is one of the EU's strategic partners but this makes it part of an ever expanding but incoherent club which also includes Brazil, Canada, China, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and the United States. The strategic partnership with India has to date generated much paperwork but it clearly has fallen short of expectations which raises questions about the EU's ability to develop a set of diplomatic procedures capable of acting effectively in an international system in which there are a number of Major Powers such as India as well as regional organisations. The EU is not currently in very good shape with neither its common institutions nor its member states demonstrating any great confidence following the poor collective response to the global financial crisis which has in turn become a particular Eurozone crisis threatening the very core of the EU itself. The member states, and in particular the larger member states, briefly showed solidarity in the face of their worst fears about the survival of the global system itself but once these passed they reverted to consideration of their individual national interests such that the major foreign policy players (Britain, France and Germany) are now more divided and less willing to sacrifice national interest for the collective EU interest than at any time since the Common Foreign and Security Policy was first established by the Maastricht Treaty some twenty years ago. These days the EU is increasingly ignored by the United States and divided by the attentions of Powers such as those, including India, which make up the group known as the BRICs. It could be argued that these Powers only real concern about dealing with a

united EU arises when their interests are directly affected by EU policies or when there is a perceived opportunity to divide the European Union from the United States as. Otherwise their preference is for dealing with individual member states rather than the collectively which is the EU and this is often a preference that is reciprocated by the major EU member states. This parlous state of affairs is reflected in the informed newspaper commentary on the EU (Barber 2009; Garton-Ash; 2009; Stephens 2009c), in those published by European think tanks (Grant 2009) and in the academic literature (Gardner 2010; Whitman 2010) all of which are generally pessimistic about the ability of the EU to get its collective external act together and play a meaningful role in the evolving international system of major powers. Thus whilst the EU has attempted of late to establish itself as a coherent producer of military equipment by establishing an European Defence Agency it finds itself then torn apart by the rivalry between two European consortia seeking to sell advanced fighter aircraft to India.

The EU, therefore, has a generic problem with its bilateral strategic diplomacy. As well as the direct bilateral relationship (*partnership diplomacy*), the EU of course also interacts indirectly with India through its *inter-regional diplomacy* but this does not offer very much by way of opportunity in the Indian case as there is no viable South Asia regional body other than the SAARC and India's relationship with ASEAN (with whom the EU does have a strong inter regional connection) is at best tenuous. In India's case then the EU is left with *partnership diplomacy* which is the least successful of the various styles of diplomacy that it has practiced to date. The EU has in general developed quite complex *issue based diplomacy* around issues areas such as the environment, climate change, human rights, good governance, non proliferation, counter terrorism, trade and development – all of which are identified in the EU-India Joint Action Plan (Council 2005) developed within the framework of the EU-India strategic partnership but none of which have to date yielded much by way of results with the EU finding itself directly opposed by India with regard to a number of the issues listed above – most spectacularly over climate change at Copenhagen in December 2009. It remains to be seen whether the EU has the decision making and diplomatic capacity to identify one or two core issues from this long list and prioritise them over the medium term in such a way that high level direct summit diplomacy between the EU and Indian leadership might produce some substantive results.

Thus the question has been raised as whether the EU in the contemporary international system has the diplomatic capacity to make, communicate and implement clear strategies towards bilateral partners such as India. It is not clear that that capacity to conduct itself like a major power currently exists but a later section will consider whether the Lisbon Treaty reforms might make it more likely that in the future the EU could approach meetings with the Indian leadership armed with the ability to conduct itself in a similar manner to that practiced successfully in recent years by the United States.

India as an emerging Great Power

Like the European Union, India is a multi-state, multi-ethnic democracy whose role in the evolving international system has been transformed by the end of the cold war. The loss of the Soviet Union as its major diplomatic ally served mainly to inspire India towards the economic reforms that have delivered 8% + growth in recent years and led India to realistically aspire to major power status (Rachman 2008; Stephens 2010; Wagner 2010; Feigenbaum 2010)). With a population like that of China of over 1 billion people but, unlike China's ageing population, with a favourable 'demographic momentum' (Renard and Biscop: 48), a large conventional army, a nuclear weapons capability that is being currently enhanced (Norton-Taylor, 2011), a space programme and a reformed economy of enormous potential India has moved inexorably towards major power status in the twenty years that have passed since the end of the cold war (Ciorciari 2011). India's rise to that status is the result both of domestic change and the new distribution of power in the contemporary system as the bipolar structure which underpinned India's somewhat pious non-aligned role, gave way to one that encompassed many more centres of power both established and emerging.

In searching through some of the academic literature on India's transformed role in international politics it is striking how little mention is given to the role or relevance of the European Union. In 2006 *Foreign Affairs* (85, 4: 1-57) published a special section on *The Rise of India* in which one struggles to find any reference to the EU and it is significant that in an article on *India's Gradual Rise* Christian Wagner (2010) also found no reason to refer to the European Union. Furthermore when Rohan Mukherjee and David Malone (2011) recently wrote in *International Affairs* about Indian foreign policy and contemporary

security challenges there was room for a discussion of domestic concerns, regional concerns and global concerns but these were about terrorism, relations with the US and China, nuclear proliferation and even international trade but there is no mention anywhere in the article of India's relationship with the EU or of the EU's potential role in any of the foreign policy concerns under consideration. One suspects that if there had been a section on the role of India within the formal and informal governance institutions of the contemporary international system then that is where the EU would have made an appearance but only as a status quo power whose member states are reluctant to give up their privileged and increasingly inappropriate positions in the world's major governance institutions such as the UN Security Council, the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation. Even Daniel Novotny (2011) searching for the *EU's place in India's Foreign and Security Policy* concluded that whilst India was seeking 'a new pattern of strategic dialogues' (2011:105) only the US is regarded as a "central factor in India's foreign and security policy" with the EU, unlike the US not sharing a common strategic interest either globally or, of greatest interest to the Indians, regionally.

Feigenbaum (2010) argues that to become a bigger player on the world scene India will need to achieve two goals; first break the confining shackles of South Asia and become a truly Asian power that is integrated into the East Asia economic system and influential throughout the wider region and second, project its power and influence globally whether by assuming a role in protecting the global commons, shaping international finance and becoming a more significant aid donor (rather than recipient as it now is from the EU) or leveraging its seat in the G20 and other leading international institutions. At present the EU has little to contribute to the former goal and it is seen as being an obstacle to India's achievement of the second goal either as a power reluctant to sanction reform of the institutions of governance or as a less attractive or effective partner than either the US or China when it comes to playing a role in protecting the global commons whether it be over climate change or nuclear proliferation.

Finally in a balanced assessment of India's relations with all the major powers Mohan offers the view that India's relations with Europe "have been limited by the fact that New Delhi is fairly unimpressed with Europe's place in global politics" (2006; 25). He argues that Europe and India have "traded places in terms of their attitudes towards the US" while Europe "seethes with resentment of US politics (at least under Bush but actually

increasingly under Obama as well) India has “abandoned its traditional role as Washington’s most trenchant critic”. Indians have responded with a positive view of the US because of their perception that all recent US administrations have shown sympathy for India’s great power ambitions whilst a declining Europe finds it convenient to remain sceptical of India’s rise. The US for instance has underpinned its strategic relationship with India first of all by agreeing to treat India as an acceptable nuclear power and secondly by clearly declaring its support for Indian permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. At present the EU could offer neither of these incentives because of its own inability to agree a common line to pursue.

Nevertheless significant linkages have developed and do exist between the EU and India although the EU is, as ever, divided on this issue - France and the UK notably supported the US-India nuclear deal against the opposition of their smaller EU partners. It has been mainly the individual EU member states, in particular the old colonial powers, that have sought to seize economic opportunities with UK PM David Cameron recently leading a large delegation of business people and UK arms sales people to India. This can be counterproductive in two ways to a satisfactory EU-Indian relationship. India is particularly sensitive about its colonial past and does not particularly wish to be reminded of it and the individual actions of member states like Britain and France serve mainly to undermine India’s perception of the European Union as itself being a viable and worthwhile interlocutor. It is hard to find any reference to the UK or the Commonwealth in recent writing about India’s role in the international system. That India is a rising power is beyond dispute but whether this makes it a responsive partner for the EU as it seeks to position itself in the evolving system is another matter. On the basis of the past few years the EU has an uphill struggle if it is to form a meaningful strategic relationship with the ‘rising power’ that is India in the near future.

It is interesting however to contemplate what sort of major power India might become (Ciorciari 2011) even though this primarily leads one into a discussion of whether India is more likely to align itself with either China or the US (but not necessarily the EU) in the future. There are those like Praful Ridwai (2010) who argue that instead of giving itself up to the West, India should use its position on the global stage wisely to continue its support for the underprivileged (a logical extension of its former non-aligned status) and there are those like Stephens (2009a) who argue that India faces a choice between being a

big power or a great or major power. Stephens, whose articles in the *Financial Times* in recent years have consistently highlighted the parlous state of the European Union and its reluctance to make the necessary adjustments to the current realities of the international system, in particular to the role of the emerging powers like India, is also critical of India's reluctance to itself accept the responsibilities that go with the global status that it now demands. Stephens (2009a) notes the fact that both the EU and the US are quicker to criticise China than India and argues that India needs to be reminded that despite its undoubted democratic credentials, despite its unfortunate colonial past and despite its vulnerability on its borders and internally to international terrorism, India cannot indefinitely avoid the contradiction between its demand to be treated as a Great Power and its reluctance to cede sovereignty in the interests of effective global governance whether it is over the Doha Development Round, the discussion of human rights in the UN or the ongoing role of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Stephens cites an international diplomat at the UN who argues that "if you look for the impasse in a global negotiation you will most likely find India guarding it." (2010). If the EU is to make headway with India then it has to develop a negotiating style that is prepared, as the Obama administration seems to be, to remind the Indians that they cannot stand aloof from their responsibilities if they want to play a lead role in international affairs. Like all the other major powers India is a challenging potential partner for the EU.

The EU and India: unsuccessful strategic interaction

In 2009 the EU was India's largest trading partner and India was the EU's 9th largest trading partner although the value of trade between the two is falling with time rather than rising as India explores alternative markets and sources of supply although the EU is still one of the largest sources of foreign direct investment in India. India and the EU are both large ethnically diverse democracies although many would see India as currently being on the up escalator and the EU as being on the down escalator with the Indian economy expanding at a rate that is three times greater than that of the EU. In many ways the EU with its rapidly aging population is a status quo power anxious to cling onto the status that it can no longer justify in the global governance institutions whilst India, with its expanding and youthful population (something that will give it a clear edge over China in 20-30 years

time) is a revolutionary power keen to claim its rightful place in an international system that is rapidly changing and to reform the institutions of global governance that currently so clearly favour the West in general and the EU member states in particular.

India, which first established a diplomatic mission to the EU in 1962, was denied membership of the Lome Convention, in 1975, despite its close ties with the UK, because France was fearful that India (and other Asian potential recipients) would by its size alone undermine the EU's preferential arrangements which were mainly enjoyed by France's former African colonies. This meant that nearly 30 years of potential EU-Indian relationship was lost until the Cooperation Agreement was signed in 1994. The EU has ensured in recent years that all the formal structures of cooperation between itself and India are in place. The relationship is still governed by the 1994 cooperation agreement which, amongst such things as economic and trade cooperation and a political dialogue, also provided for regular summits that have taken place annually since 2000 but which have never really delivered anything of substance being notorious mainly for the length of their agenda's and the absence of anything other than earnest statements that never lead to action. The bilateral relationship matters because India has only a marginal involvement in ASEAN and ASEM which are the main fora for the EU's multilateral engagement with Asia. The 5th of EU-India summits in The Hague in 2004 saw the establishment of the EU-India Strategic Partnership which was supposed to let the two actors "better address complex international issues in the context of globalisation. To underpin that Strategic Partnership, the 2005 EU-India summit adopted the even more mind numbing EU-India Joint Action Plan (Council 2005) which defined common objectives and anticipated a whole range of supporting activities in the areas of political, economic and aid cooperation. In 2006 the next summit even went as far as to propose the eventual negotiation of a free trade agreement and after that it would be fair to say that the relationship stalled and lost momentum as the US and China began to vie with one another for influence over and support from India. Attempts to refresh the partnership both procedurally and substantively have been made since the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty (see next section) with much store being placed at the 2012 summit in February 2012 on the hoped for conclusions of the negotiations to establish a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). However at the time of writing (July 2012) the FTA remains unsigned with the EU still anxious to open up Indian market but with India seeking to maintain high levels of protection for its

automobile , paper, pharmaceutical and food processing industries as well as its very important service sector. India has shown far more determination to conclude Free Trade Agreements with other Asian states and organisations than with the EU and it could be argued that the general readiness to sign such agreements arises partly from India's refusal, along with other emerging powers, to make the concessions needed to reach a global trade agreement via the WTO Doha Round that fitted better into the EU's notion of responsible global governance.

The EU's country strategy paper for India (EEAS 2007) records that for the present financial perspective (2007-2013) nearly €500 million were allocated for India as 'transitional assistance' as India was seen as rapidly progressing from being a state requiring development aid to a state capable of participating in mutual cooperative arrangements traditionally associated with developed rather than developing countries. There will be no further development aid for India beyond 2013 which will itself have a slightly negative bearing on the relationship.

In 2010 Catherine Ashton the newly installed EUHR visited India to "boost the strategic partnership" but her agenda was so wide that it was effectively meaningless and nothing like the well prepared and focussed meeting that the Indians later held with President Obama that just concentrated on a couple of issues. Ashton arrived accompanied by her chief advisor on counter terrorism and with the chief of the EU military staff but it is not clear from the subsequent declarations what they actually talked about or achieved.

The EU-India strategic partnership is overshadowed by the India-US and the India China relationships both of which tend to focus on issues of immediate interest to India. Although the EU is loosely engaged in South Asia and more so in South East Asia, via its well established links with ASEAN, it has only very limited leverage in the area and as a result India has little to gain strategically. It is however the attention that the US and China are giving to India which has drawn in the EU in the first place and which may offer opportunities in the future. The EU sees the US and China as its direct competitors and this may be exploitable by India although the EU will draw little comfort from episodes like the Copenhagen Climate Change conference at the end of 2009 which saw its two direct competitors for influence over India work together with India to utterly isolate the EU.

Despite the ever more complex documentation little of real substance or politico-

diplomatic significance has emerged from recent bursts of EU level activity aimed at India and the perception within India (Fioramonti 2007) is still that some EU member states (most obviously the UK) are much more active diplomatically than the EU itself. For the EU the major problem of trying to give a strategic partnership with India content and meaning still lies within the EU itself and with the reluctance of its major member states to either work together to advance collective interests determined at the EU level or, more importantly, make individual national concessions and sacrifices within the institutional structures of global governance and thus allow the reform of these institutions which the Indians see as essential if they are to be treated with the respect and status that they believe they are entitled to as emerging powers in a changing system. The US and the Chinese recognise this and will compete with one another to push for such reforms, be they of the UN (Lamont and Luce 2010) or the IMF, that will allow them to fully engage with India. It is not clear that the EU's member states have the will to do this and creating that collective will to accept major changes in the way that the global institutions are governed is one of the biggest challenges that Van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton currently face.

There is lots of technical detail and substantive content in the EU-India economic relationship to research and analyse in the EU-India relationship but a meaningful interaction between two major powers it most certainly isn't. It is clear what India wants from the EU and that is to be treated as something other than just a big market (which is what one suspects the EU would like to think of it as) but it is not clear that the EU can get its act together to deliver something different and it is even less clear what the EU itself wants from India or from its relationship with the region that India finds itself at the centre of. The contrast with the way that the Indian-US relationship has developed is striking. In many ways the Indians have become rather 'modern' realists who despite their democratic credentials are reluctant to support human rights lobbies or humanitarian interventions while for its part the EU continues to aspire to a more idealistic and 'post modern' approach. The EU has plenty of problems on its borders within the European region but it has shown little understanding of those that India faces on its own borders and in relation to its adjacent great power. India has to worry about China and its relations with India's troublesome neighbours in much the same way as the EU has to worry about the role of Russia within its own region but the connection is more easily made in

New Delhi than it is in Brussels. As a result the EU–Indian strategic partnership is neither very strategic in the realist sense nor is it much of a partnership (Jaffrelot 2006; Sachdeva 2008; Wulbers 2011; Khandekar 2011). The failure of the EU to appreciate that India is struggling with both China and the US and that it is looking for allies with regard to China’s growing role in the region is a failure of strategic vision and imagination by the EU and it represents not just a challenge to the EU’s new foreign policy leadership duo but a very real opportunity. Things are made worse by the fact that the EU does not seem to have devoted very much time or effort to clarifying its own strategic interests and objectives in Asia. As Keukeleire and Bruyninckx (2011: 397) point out the EU does not have firm stances on Asian issues that are of concern to India; its policy on Afghanistan is modest (its NATO that does the fighting not the EU), the EU has no clear line on the simmering conflict between India and Pakistan (although it does seek India’s cooperation on counter terrorism) and the EU is silent on the many issues that divide India and China. If Van Rompuy and Ashton can mobilise the resources of the European External Action Service (EEAS) to help the European Council become more strategically aware and focussed about India then there may be some hope that in the future the EU and India can start to deal with one another as major powers rather than just commercial partners and rivals as is the case at present.

What does the Lisbon Treaty offer?

The Lisbon Treaty (Gardner and Eizenstat 2010) which brought to a conclusion nearly ten years of wrangling about the future of the EU in general, and of the EU’s external role in the world in particular, does offer some hope for the development of the EU’s diplomatic capacity to participate effectively in strategic partnerships with the major powers such as India. After Lisbon at least the European Union has legal status and even though the various EU and member state competences, as well as the complexities of the various decision-making systems, remain as confused as they ever were, the nonsense of a so-called major power referring to itself as the *European Community and its Member States* has now gone.

Nevertheless it is now clear that the newly reconstituted post of High Representative has given Catherine Ashton three impossible and incompatible jobs – chairing the Foreign Affairs Council, being an EU Commissioner and both creating and running the European External Action Service. Creating the EEAS has involve a high degree of bureaucratic infighting between the Commission, the European Parliament, the Council and the member states. The President of the Council is forced to compete with the President of the European Commission at the summits, which are so vital to the success of the EU's strategic partnerships, leaving the EU's partners still confused as to who 'speaks for Europe'. There has been much criticism of the way that Catherine Ashton has approached her impossible job and both she and Van Rompuy have been belittled by some within the EU for their lack of foreign policy experience and reputation although there is also a counter view that says that by their very understatement the two of them are ideally suited for the mediating role that their positions require.

The delays in establishing the EEAS mean that it is still too soon to tell whether the Lisbon reforms will make any real difference to the EU's diplomatic capacity and its ability to make more of its strategic partnerships (but see Renard and Biscop 2012). However some progress has been made with the ongoing abolition of the counterproductive rotating Council Presidency and Presidents Van Rompuy and Barroso are gradually establishing themselves as the collective external faces of the European Union although there are as yet no real signs that Van Rompuy has had any real success in preventing his colleagues in the European Council from undertaking damaging national initiatives that undermine the collective EU position.

Some work has been done since the Lisbon Treaty by Ashton and Van Rompuy on the strengthening of their participation in the bilateral summits that play such an important and central role in the various strategic partnerships that the EU is engaged upon. In September of 2010 they were at last able to turn their full attention to external relations and to a meeting of the European Council specifically called to discuss the management of bilateral summits related to EU Strategic Partnerships.

In the Presidency Conclusions (European Council 2010a) it was noted that "the emergence of new players with their own world views and interests is also an important new feature in the international environment" and that this meant that, despite its previous external relations achievements, the Union, now needed to "act more strategically so as to

bring Europe's true weight to bear internationally." It was argued that "this requires a clear identification of its strategic interests and objectives at a given moment and refocused reflection on the means to pursue them more assertively" To achieve this the European Council called for "improved synergies between the EU and national levels... for enhanced coordination between institutional actors, the better integration of all relevant instruments and policies and **for summit meetings with third countries to be used more effectively**" (my emphasis). In an Annex (1) to the Presidency Conclusions the European Council laid down six key points concerning the 'Internal arrangements required to improve the EU's performance in this area

The brief from the European Council to Ashton was very specific about how ideally bi-lateral summits would be prepared for and then implemented. Vogel (2010) reports that in the three weeks that followed that Council meeting the EU held summits with South Africa and China and also met within the wider EU-Asia meeting. He argues that these summits showed little evidence that the EU had managed to get more focussed substance into its preparations and this analysis seems to hold good for most of the subsequent summits including the one held with India in February 2012 which once again managed to discuss everything on the lengthy agenda but still fail to progress any items from the discussion phase to the action phase

In the Conclusions of the October European Council (European Council 2010b) however there is just a brief note stating that the EU discussed the key political messages which the President of the European Council and the President of the Commission will promote at the forthcoming summits with the US, Russia, Ukraine, India and Africa. - if one looks at the communiqué after the February 2012 EU-India summit (EEAS 2012) then it is hard to detect the introduction by the EU of the 'key political messages' discussed above.

Conclusions

- The EU will not be an effective strategic partner for India or any other major power until it has developed the necessary internal agreements on collective EU interests and policy lines and unless the President of the Council is able to get a grip on his

own institution possibly by naming and shaming (or at least threatening to do so) those member states whose pursuit of short term national advantage inhibits or undermines EU collective action.

- The relationship with India in particular indicates that the EU has to find a way of accepting that the distribution of power within the formal institutions of global governance has to be reformed and that this primarily involves individual EU member states relinquishing their national seats in favour of an EU seat. The G20 meeting held in London in the Spring of 2009 was a success primarily because it was an institutionalisation of the new geopolitical landscape and not a meeting of the old G8 with walk on parts for China and India as, in Philip Stephen's (2009b) words, "the world at last catching a true reflection of itself". EU leaders however continue to try and hang on to what they still think they have in terms of global status and influence. The EU speaks the language of inclusiveness but it is genuinely fearful of giving ground to rising powers like India. It is the US that has taken the lead in trying to include these powers in a system that it nevertheless still wishes to dominate.
- The EU needs better diplomatic defences against the natural tendencies of the other major powers, like India, to divide and rule the potentially fractious member states of the EU
- The EU needs to identify and prioritise specific objectives for its major power diplomacy and it needs to impress on partners like India that the major power status which must be ceded to them also carries responsibilities. In the case of India the EU needs also to show a much greater awareness of India's immediate regional challenges.
- When it comes to strategic diplomacy and to establishing a meaningful and strategic relationship with emerging powers such as India the EU needs to further perfect, via the new roles of the President of the Council, the High Representative and the

European External Action Service, its ability to conduct summit diplomacy which is central to major power interaction and which is currently the single greatest weakness of the EU diplomatic system

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