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Book Review: The European Union and India: Rhetoric or Meaningful Partnership? by Pascaline Winand, Marika Vicziany, and Poonam Datar

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Winand, Pascaline, Marika Vicziany, and Poonam Datar. *The European Union and India: Rhetoric or Meaningful Partnership?* Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015. xiv + 373 pages. Hardcover, \$150.00.

The European Union (EU) and India have what the authors call a “special relationship.” There has been much enthusiasm regarding this relationship which dates back to the early 1960s when India was one of the ten countries that the European Union had chosen as a strategic partner in the international community (The European Union and India, Solana, 2014). India is an obvious strategic partner for the EU given that India is the most populous democracy in the world and one of the emerging powers in South Asia. The Joint Political Statement of 1993 and the 1994 Co-operation Agreement, which is the current legislative framework for cooperation between the EU and India, opened the door to a broad political dialogue which evolves through annual Summits, regular ministerial meetings, and expert level conferences.

Despite several EU and Indian economic cooperation agreements, the asymmetrical economic relationship has created much friction between the two partners. For example, as Solana (2014) explains, the EU and India have been working on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) for the past seven years and even after twelve rounds of negotiations a conclusion to the FTA remains elusive. In many areas, such as the IT industry and agriculture, the partnership holds great potential, but has not yet delivered as expected (Solana, 2014). Therefore, EU-India relations today “seem to be long on agreements but short on implementation” (p. 177).

This multi-disciplinary book provides a comprehensive analysis of the EU-India relationship from 1950 to the present day, as a way of assessing whether a meaningful and sustainable relationship is in fact emerging and whether it will play a role in the future of international diplomacy and business. Using both historical insights and contemporary policy analysis, the professors investigate whether the social, economic and political interests of the EU and India are genuinely compatible. Leaders in both regions have been promoting the relationship for many decades, but the authors scrutinize their words to discover whether they are merely rhetorical gestures or reflect genuine complementarities. They also investigate the motivation behind the relationship, and provide an in-depth analysis of the areas of mutual interest and conflict.

There are ten chapters in the book that are subdivided into two sections. Section I is composed of the first five chapters covering the evolution of the EU-India relationship from the late 1940s to the beginning of the twenty-first century, while Section II includes the last five chapters and approaches EU-Indian relations thematically covering issues such as agriculture, foreign direct investment, and - in light of 9/11 - national security issues. In Chapter 1, Winand, Vicziany and Datar analyze how the Government of India and business communities gradually broke away from old colonial patterns and developed new strategies via negotiations in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Chapter 2 examines British and Indian relations in light of Britain’s ascension to join the European Economic Community (EEC). In Chapter 3, given the EEC’s policies towards Asia, the authors examine how Britain’s application to join the EEC brought British and Indian lobbyists together to make sure that India was not left out of this agreement. In Chapter 4, Winand, Vicziany and Datar examine the implementation of the

Commercial Cooperation Agreement and deal with the puzzling problem of why continual agreements were necessary. Were the agreements recognition of India's importance within international systems or were they just another form of neo-colonialism disguised under the label "structural adjustment programs"? Chapter 5 addresses the questions: What did the end of the Cold War mean for EU-India relations? How will it change?

Section II of the book looks at EU-India relations from a thematic perspective and addresses the key question: What does India have to offer the EU given India's modern hybrid nature? India is a nation of contrasts. Those contrasts are part of the image that India projects to the rest of the world, and as Former President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, stated: "In politics, images are part of the facts" (p. 166). India has a dynamic economy with high technological capacities counterbalanced by extreme poverty, unemployment, and discrimination affecting over 40 percent of the population. Furthermore, India remains largely an agricultural country with a relatively small industrial sector compared with China. However, the rise in poverty within India is creating an increase in the power and influence of Maoist insurgents who promise to establish a fairer regime for marginalized communities and families.

Given significant changes in the re-configuration of global power, the EU will have to learn to adapt to the tale of two Indias while India learns to cope with an EU in which there are tensions between the regional organization and its members. In addition, Europeans view multilateralism as entailing a willingness to give up a portion of one's sovereignty in the interest of a collective management of common affairs. However, India uses international institutions to ensure that the strong do not always prevail over the weak, and sees them mostly as venues for defending national interests. The future of the EU-India relationship is open to much speculation.

In conclusion, I highly recommend Winand, Vicziany and Datar's *The European Union and India: Rhetoric or Meaningful Partnership?* This text will appeal to academics, students and policy-makers with an interest in international and comparative politics, international relations, public policy, economic development and business, as well as Asian studies and European studies. Currently, not only is India being transformed by endogenous political, social, and economic changes, but also the European Union is undergoing some much needed changes including a leadership transition. Given the radical transformation of the international political system in the twenty-first century, only time will tell how meaningful a partnership will ultimately be forged between the European Union and India.

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