

Modi's India and the European Union: A Perception Study

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India and the European Union (EU) have long been touted as natural partners, yet despite their apparent commonalities, political relations between the two global powers have lost momentum. The impasse reached in negotiations towards an EU–India Free-Trade Agreement (BTIA), and niggling bilateral disputes are indicative of the current state of affairs. Therefore the EU is for India a relatively insignificant partner, which is reflected in the way the EU is presented in the Indian media. Although occasionally portrayed in a negative way, the EU is on the whole treated with indifference by the Indian online news media, receiving minimal coverage. France, Germany and the United Kingdom (UK) are far more visible in the Indian media, unsurprisingly as close bilateral ties with these three EU Member States is central to the Government of India's strategy in Europe. A shortage of understanding about the EU and a lack of profile gained by EU leadership in India are identified as main causes for the current indifference felt towards the EU in India. High level engagement is identified as being the most effective way to increase the EU's profile and perception in India, with the EU–India summit expected in the first half of 2016, offering leaders a perfect platform.

Keywords: EU, Indian media, perception, news frequency, sources and framing, FTA, France, Germany and the UK.

Introduction

In many ways the European Union (EU) and India strike one as being natural partners. Pluralistic, multilingual and multi-ethnic, both rigidly uphold principles of democracy under constant scrutiny from noisy media organisations and a rich civil society. As well as these core values, many key interests align – an economically strong India could be a lucrative market for EU companies, while the EU could be an invaluable source of investment for India. Furthermore, there are clear joint priorities in Asian security issues, particularly with regard to combating terrorism, and both share similar ideas with regard to sustainable development and effective multilateralism.

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For years India has been a shrinking violet globally, partly as a result of the ‘policy paralysis’ caused by weak coalition governments and a fractured ruling Congress Party. However, the elections held in May 2014 delivered new leadership – the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Narendra Modi, who claimed to offer a vision of a ‘stronger India, its place restored in the top tier of world powers’.¹

Toward this end Modi has placed renewed focus on India’s foreign policy, spending more than 50 days of his first year on foreign trips and meeting upwards of 50 national leaders for direct talks.² Top priority has been to reinforce India’s influence in South Asia, the policy of ‘Putting Neighbours First’ reflecting the realisation that to be a global power, India must first be a regional power. Modi made a statement of intent by inviting the leaders of all the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) nations to his inauguration ceremony. He has also made an effort to ‘meet the neighbours’, Bhutan being his first overseas visit, shortly followed by a trip to Nepal. Outside of India’s immediate neighbourhood, Modi has predominantly pursued an ‘Act East’ policy, making high-profile state visits to both China and Japan. India’s relations with Japan were upgraded to a ‘special strategic and global partnership’,³ while Modi was able to extract significant investment from China. Alongside these primary strategies, Modi has been careful to keep close relations with other global powers such as India’s long time ally Russia. When looking west, Modi has focused his attention on engagement with the United States, himself making a high profile visit, before receiving President Obama in New Delhi.

India’s increased global profile, in addition to Modi’s domestic focus on growth and development, seemed to have raised the potential for more cooperation with the EU.⁴ And yet, in 2015 EU–India relations are at a particularly low ebb, the disappearance of a proposed summit in the spring of 2015 symptomatic of the partnership’s unfulfilled potential and lost momentum.⁵ Although the lack of an EU–India summit may be blamed on Brussels (the European Commission failed to communicate a proposed schedule to New Delhi), Modi himself has clearly shown little appetite for engaging with the EU during his first year. This is not a complete rupture with the past, since EU–India relations had also been neglected in the years before he became PM.

¹ N. Kumar, ‘Passage From India: The Next Global Player’, *Time Magazine*, 18 May 2015, pp. 18–25.

² ‘Special Report: India’, *The Economist*, 23 May 2015, p. 14.

³ G. Khandekar, ‘Modi’s Foreign Policy Mantra: geoeconomics, regional hegemony, global aspirations’, *FRIDE, Agora Asia-Europe Programme*, 2014, No. 17, p. 3. http://fride.org/download/PB_17_Modis_Foreign_Policy.pdf (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁴ B. Mukherjee, ‘India and the European Union: Future Perspectives’, *Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs*, 2015, <http://mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?24797/India+and+the+European+Union+Future+Perspectives> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁵ G. Sachdeva, ‘Evaluation of the EU-India Strategic Partnership and the potential for its revitalisation’, *Directorate-General for External Policies, Policy Department*, 2015, p. 5. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/534987/EXPO_STU\(2015\)534987_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/534987/EXPO_STU(2015)534987_EN.pdf) (accessed on 5 August 2015).

India initiated diplomatic dialogue with the EU (back then the European Economic Community) in 1961, but it was the end of the Cold War that created new opportunities for the EU and India to work together. European and Indian visions of a democratic, rule-based multipolar world coincided, and in 2004 they became 'strategic partners' – a title reserved for the EU's most important global allies – with a Joint Action Plan being launched in 2005.⁶ The 'strategic partnership' aims to improve ties with India through bilateral dialogue and cooperation in a whole host of areas, including: trade and economics – intellectual property rights, trade defence instruments, technical barriers to trade and customs cooperation;⁷ political cooperation – effective multilateralism, regional cooperation, disarmament and non-proliferation, combating terrorism and organised crime; social cooperation – promotion of human rights and the rule of law; and environmental cooperation – sustainable development, climate change, renewable energy and energy efficiency.⁸

However, after this initial flurry of activity, since the start of the 2010s the relationship has stalled, with cooperation in truly strategic areas, such as defence and civil nuclear programme, yet to emerge.⁹ Today, as the EU is India's largest trading partner, trade and economics remain 'the core of EU–India relations'.¹⁰ A proposed EU–India Bilateral Free Trade Agreement (BTIA) could yet propel economic cooperation to new levels, however, into their 9th year negotiations remained deadlocked.¹¹

By exploring how the EU is perceived in India, this paper will investigate whether disinterest in the EU is typical of Indian views more generally or merely a reflection of Modi's preferences. Understanding how the EU is perceived internationally is a crucial first step in formulating coherent policies toward partner countries, a position recognised by the European Commission.¹² Within the current context of faltering EU–India relations, a greater appreciation of how India imagines the EU can potentially provide a spark to reignite more effective cooperation. Such knowledge pertaining to how the EU is understood beyond its borders can also help more clearly define Europe for itself, in a period in which domestic struggles – Euroscepticism, Migration, 'Grexit' – raise questions about our current conceptualisation of 'Europe'.

⁶ G. Sachdeva, 'Evaluation of...', op.cit., p. 7.

⁷ http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_130306.pdf (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁸ 'The India-EU Strategic Partnership Joint Action Plan', *Council of the European Union*, 2005, Press Release 11984/05 (Presse, 223), http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/er/86130.pdf (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁹ G. Sachdeva, 'EU-China and EU-India: A Tale of Two Strategic Partnerships', *Strategic Analysis*, 2014, Vol. 38, No. 4, pp. 427–431.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ 'European Commission Requests Negotiating Mandates for Bilateral Trade Agreements with India, South Korea, ASEAN', *European Commission*, 2006, http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/december/tradoc_131470.pdf (accessed on 5 August 2015).

¹² M. Holland et al, 'The EU Through the Eyes of Asia Volume I', *Asia-Europe Foundation*, 2007, p. 24, http://www.asef.org/images/stories/publications/ebooks/EU-through-eyes-Asia_Vol01.pdf (accessed on 5 August 2015).

Perception studies have become increasingly prevalent in the field of European Studies during the preceding decade. After an initial study of 2002 exploring EU perceptions in New Zealand,¹³ their number has proliferated, encompassing studies in Thailand, Australia, South Korea, Hong Kong, China, Singapore, Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines. Most notable was the series coordinated by Martin Holland – ‘The EU Through the Eyes of Asia’,¹⁴ two volumes of impressive weight, which provide a wealth of analysis but have not been updated since 2009.

Indian perceptions have however been somewhat neglected, reflecting a belief that China and East Asia receive a disproportionate level of consideration from within the EU, by both academics contemplating the ‘rise of China’ and policy-makers who court Beijing.¹⁵ There is a small amount of literature that has focused on Indian perspectives, which this study will build upon. Karine Lisbonne-de Vergeron conducted two studies, looking at Indian perspectives of Europe before and after the global financial crisis.¹⁶ A more recent study was conducted in 2009 by Rajendra K. Jain and Shreya Pandey at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi and published in 2010 and 2012.¹⁷ This study in particular can prove to be an interesting source for comparison with the findings made in the current study, given the time that has elapsed since its publication. Another study worth mentioning is the one by S. A. Wülbers.¹⁸

Methodology

While it is common for perception studies to be comprised of three elements – media evaluation, public opinion surveys and elite interviews – for the purpose of this study it was decided to focus only on a media evaluation. This choice was made partly as a result of practical constraints, but it was also decided that media evaluation represents the central tenet of the trio. While perceptions depend to some degree on the worldview of actors and their belief systems, it is also accepted that the media is a major source for forming political ideas. This is particularly true when researching

¹³ M. Holland et al, ‘External Perceptions of the European Union’, *National Centre for Research on Europe*, 2003, <http://www.europe.canterbury.ac.nz/app/pilot.shtml> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

¹⁴ M. Holland et al, ‘The EU...’, op.cit., p. 24; M. Holland, P.Ryan and N. Chaban, ‘The EU Through the Eyes of Asia Volume II: New Cases, New Findings’, *World Scientific*, 2009.

¹⁵ K. Lisbonne-de Vergeron, *Chinese and Indian views of Europe since the crisis: New perspectives from the emerging Asian giants*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung: London, 2011, p. 37, http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_29944-1522-2-30.pdf?120118092440 (accessed on 5 August 2015).

¹⁶ K. Lisbonne-de Vergeron, *Contemporary Indian Views of Europe*, Chatham House: London, 2006, <http://www.india-platform.org/files/www.india-platform.org/Lisbonne-de%20Vergeron%20-%20Indian%20views.pdf> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

¹⁷ R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, ‘The European Union in the eyes of India’, *Asia Eur J*, 2010, Vol. 8, pp. 193–209; R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, ‘The Public Attitudes and Images of the European Union in India’, *India Quarterly*, 2012, Vol. 68/4, pp. 331–343

¹⁸ S. A. Wülbers, ‘*The Paradox of EU-India Relations: Missed Opportunities in Politics, Economics, Development Cooperation, and Culture*’, Lexington Books, 2010, p. 20.

such distant regions as the EU and India as perceptions are less likely to be formed by personal relations, making media representations more influential. By selecting just a small number of news items from thousands, media organisations frame the world for their audience – therefore influencing both public opinion and elite perspectives.

An image of how India perceives the EU will be built by evaluating a section of the online news media in India. This represents an update on previous perception studies, which have generally focused only on traditional media forms – print, radio and television. It seems logical in 2015 to conduct research of online media, online news having overtaken newspaper readership globally in 2010.¹⁹ Although Internet access in India is far from complete, there are more new Internet users in India each year than in any other country in the world,²⁰ with 2013 data showing that online news media in India was already on the verge of overtaking print media.²¹

The three media outlets researched for the current study were chosen primarily due to their high level of readership, they are three of the top six most visited online news sites in India.²² A secondary consideration was to find a representative sample, which was achieved by incorporating diverse publications: a Hindi-language daily, an English-language daily and a weekly publication. The *Dainik Jagran* is India's most popular daily print newspaper,²³ and the articles for current study were taken from its English news website (post.jagran.com). The *Hindustan Times* is an English-language daily newspaper, whose website (hindustantimes.com) is the third most visited news website in India. And *India Today* (indiatoday.intoday.in) a weekly magazine, is the fourth most visited news site in India.²⁴

For part one – the Indian perception of the EU – the research period ran for 11 months, from 1 June 2014 until the end of April 2015. This period was chosen to coincide with the beginning of Modi's premiership – as argued in the introduction, his arrival has seen a profound change in India's foreign relations, making this an appropriate moment to begin the research. A research period of 11 months will establish a representative picture of how India perceives the EU, such an extended period preventing one particular event or issue skewing the results. All articles which mentioned 'European Union' or 'EU' were included in the study, resulting in 50 articles from 'post.jagran.com', 86 articles from 'hindustantimes.com' and 47 articles from 'indiatoday.intoday.in', creating a total sample of 183 articles for part one of the study.

¹⁹ Pew Research Center, 'The State of the News Media 2011', *Project for Excellence in Journalism*, 2011, <http://www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2011/overview-2/> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

²⁰ <http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users-by-country/> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

²¹ <http://www.comscore.com/Insights/Press-Releases/2013/10/Indias-Daily-Readership-of-Online-News-and-Information-Jumps-34-Percent-in-the-Past-Year> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ 'Indian Readership Survey 2014 Topline Findings', *Media Research Users Council*, 2014, http://www.mruc.net/sites/default/files/IRS%202014%20Topline%20Findings_0.pdf (accessed on 5 August 2015).

²⁴ <http://www.comscore.com/Insights/Press-Releases/2013/10/Indias-Daily-Readership-of-Online-News-and-Information-Jumps-34-Percent-in-the-Past-Year> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

The study will make use of quantitative and qualitative elements in order to produce a more complete picture of Indian perspectives. Each article will be evaluated with regard to how it ‘frames’ the EU. Articles will be classified as having framed the subject as primarily an: economic, political, social or environmental actor. Economic actorness includes involvement in trade issues and disputes, anti-trust investigations and also the economic sanctioning of Russia – although this is clearly politically motivated, the choice of sanctioning reflects the EU’s preference for economic tools. Political actorness includes activity in traditionally strategic areas such as defence and civil nuclear programmes, as well as diplomatic activity such as the Iran nuclear talks. Social actorness includes the promotion or setting of social norms, through human rights promotion at home or abroad, or legislating on issues such as crime, drugs etc.

Articles will also be evaluated for the tone in which they present the subject. A score of +1 will be attributed to an article that presents the subject in a positive light, for example: when the EU is recognised as an environmental leader by South Korea.²⁵ Articles that describe the subject negatively, such as when the EU was criticised over its reaction to the migrant crisis,²⁶ receive a score of –1, with neutral articles scored as 0. To gain a more nuanced view of how the subjects are being presented, measures of centrality and domesticity were also incorporated. Centrality assesses how important the subject is within an article, whether it is the main focus of the article, a secondary or comparative focus, or a minor actor mentioned only briefly. The measure of domesticity records the geographical focus of an article, dividing articles into three groups; those referring primarily to issues about the subject, those referring to Indian issues, and those based on events in a third country. In order to paint the most complete picture possible, other data were also collected; article sources, the frequency with which relevant officials were mentioned, and the frequency with which EU institutions were mentioned.

EU news frequency and sources

The EU received a very low level of exposure in the chosen publications during the research period. 183 articles over 11 months gives an average of just 17 articles per month across the three websites. The level of coverage naturally varied between the sites, the *Dainik Jagran* (DJ) website – related to India’s most read newspaper – published, on average, less than 5 articles mentioning the EU per month. Although the *Hindustan Times* (HT) site, being generally more open to international news, was more

²⁵ ‘South Korea is expected to launch the 2nd largest Carbon Market in the world’, *India Today*, 2015, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/education/story/south-korea-is-expected-to-launch-the-2nd-largest-carbon-market-in-the-world/1/412827.html> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

²⁶ P. Sonwalkar, ‘Europe’s migrant crisis: EU’s funds not enough, say critics’, *Hindustan Times*, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/europe-s-migrant-crisis-eu-s-offer-of-more-funds-not-enough-say-critics/article1-1341108.aspx> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

inclined to publish news about the EU, it still averaged less than 8 articles per month. Interestingly, the EU is therefore less visible in the Indian media in 2014–2015 than in Jain and Pandey’s 2009 study. Although not perfectly comparable (the publications sampled are not identical, and their study was based on print media rather than online media), the 2009 study found, on average, 13 articles per month, per publication referencing the EU – more than twice this study. This general lack of media visibility is consistent with previous perception studies conducted elsewhere in Asia regarding the EU.²⁷ As concluded by Holland, this lack of visibility suggests to the public that the EU is insignificant and may contribute to a perception in India that the EU is a minor global power.

The Indian perception of the EU will also be shaped to some extent by the articles’ authors. Contrary to the other outlets, the DJ news website attributed all of its articles to ‘Jagran Post News Desk – Jagran Post Editorial’, which accordingly appears here as the largest source of EU news. There is reason to doubt the authenticity of this, however, as a number of articles surfaced in the same form in other publications, with a different source credited. ‘India-EU FTA would require compromises by all sides: Merkel’²⁸ was also published on the same day in *The Economic Times*, an Indian business daily, credited to the Press Trust of India (PTI).²⁹

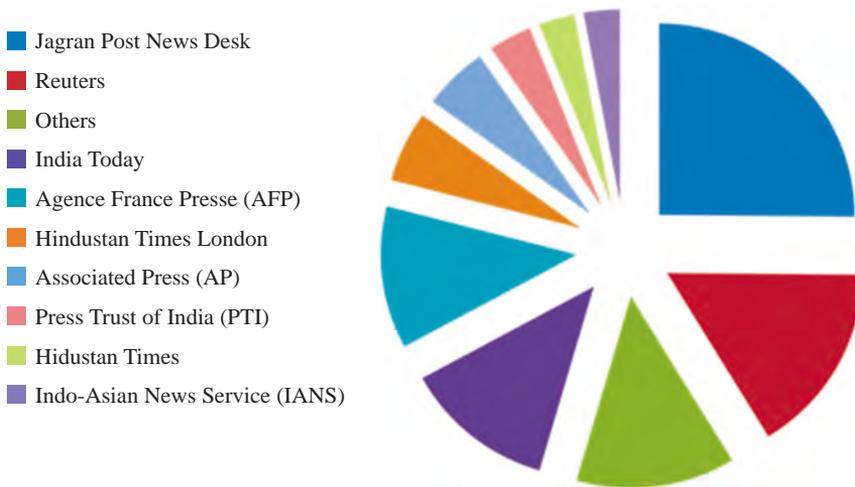


Figure 1 Sources of EU news

²⁷ M. Holland et al, ‘The EU...’, op.cit., p. 288.

²⁸ ‘EU FTA would require compromises by all sides – Merkel’, *Dainik Jagran*, 2015, <http://post.jagran.com/IndiaEU-FTA-would-require-compromises-by-all-sides-Merkel-1429020282> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

²⁹ Press Trust of India, ‘EU FTA would require compromises by all sides – Merkel’, *Economic Times*, 2015, http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2015-04-14/news/61142284_1_india-eu-fta-indian-it-investment-agreement (accessed on 5 August 2015).

Over half of the articles were supplied by news agencies, although only a small minority originated from India-based agencies, with the Press Trust of India (PTI) and the Indo-Asian News Service (IANS) contributing a combined 11 articles. Western news agencies were therefore the dominant source of EU news, providing around half of the articles that appeared in the HT and India Today (IT). Reuters was the most prevalent, followed by the Agence France Presse (AFP), a Paris-based agency, and the Associated Press (AP), from New York. This reliance upon Western news agencies reflects what Jain and Pandey describe as ‘the domination of Anglo-American imagery’ in the Indian media since India’s independence in 1947.³⁰ This means that the Indian perception of the EU will be, to a large extent, conditioned by the British, and to a lesser extent French, perception. France and the UK currently harbour some of the most vocal Eurosceptic voices, the Front National in France and the UK Independence Party – already forcing a referendum on EU membership in the UK. Therefore, these British (or more accurately English) and French perceptions of the EU are unlikely to be positive ones given the current climate.

Only a minority of the EU news featured in the HT and IT was written by their own correspondents, who contributed just under half of the articles in the IT and about one fifth in the HT. The way in which both websites (and quite likely also the DJ) rely heavily on news agencies for their EU news rather than their own correspondents again suggests that the EU is perceived as relatively insignificant. This suspicion is compounded when one considers that none of the news organisations featured have a correspondent based permanently in ‘the capital of Europe’ (in fact the only permanent correspondent in Europe is the HT journalist based in London – a fact only likely to compound the domination of ‘Anglo-American imagery’³¹). As a result, only a very small fraction of EU news originates from Brussels itself.

The Indian press is not unique in neglecting Brussels; in fact, journalists are ‘deserting’ Brussels, with the press pack shrinking by almost 60 per cent in the 2000s.³² Commentators have noted how this trend has resulted in a reduction and dilution of EU news, both in the Indian³³ and European media.³⁴ This can therefore help explain why the EU lacks visibility in the Indian media; however, this ‘dilution’ of EU news may also impact upon perceptions in India. Correspondents who are based permanently in Brussels are likely to have a deeper understanding of the EU, which they are able to pass on to the public, an understanding that may even manifest itself in more positive

³⁰ R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, ‘The European...’, op.cit., p. 194 and R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, ‘The Public...’, op.cit., p. 332.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² ‘Journalists Deserting Brussels’, *The Economist*, 2010, http://www.economist.com/blogs/charlemagne/2010/03/journalists_deserting_brussels (accessed on 5 August 2015).

³³ R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, ‘The European Union...’, op.cit., p. 195 and R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, ‘The Public...’, op.cit., p. 334.

³⁴ *The Economist*, ‘Journalists...’, op.cit.

reporting on the EU. It is therefore possible that the absence of journalists in Brussels may have a negative impact upon the way the EU is perceived in India and globally.

This knowledge gap, identifiable in much of the coverage, is filled to some extent by the presence of articles supplied by 'others' – usually experts, academics or social commentators. An article in the HT was written by Gulshan Sachdeva, a professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and ICCR chairholder at the KU Leuven in Belgium, titled: 'In economic terms, the EU should matter a lot more'.³⁵ These articles tend to be more analytical in their coverage of the EU and Indo-EU relations, but they represent only a small minority of articles, contributing around 10 per cent of the total coverage.

EU frames

The EU was described predominantly as an economic actor in 38 per cent of articles, making it the most common framing. Many of these articles were with reference to the economic sanctions imposed by the EU upon Russia³⁶ and Russian countermeasures.³⁷ A number of further articles were written in reference to the stalled, yet ongoing, negotiations toward an EU–India Free Trade Agreement, with reports that talks may resume for the first time since May 2013.³⁸

Perception studies elsewhere in Asia have shown that the EU is most often perceived as an economic actor,³⁹ with the previous study on Indian perceptions also confirming that it is the EU's status as an economic giant that most defines it.⁴⁰

The second most frequently applied frame was that of 'social actor', accounting for 25 per cent of the total. The EU's role as a legislator was often alluded to, with a particular preference in the Indian media for news about the information technology and online media sectors, reflecting the importance of these sectors in India – a large number of articles reported on the 'right to be forgotten' European Court of Justice

³⁵ G. Sachdeva, 'In economic terms the EU should matter a lot more', *Hindustan Times*, 2014, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/comment/analysis/in-economic-terms-the-eu-should-matter-a-lot-more/article1-1279158.aspx> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

³⁶ 'US, EU to intensify sanctions on Russia over Ukraine: Obama', *Dainik Jagran*, 2014, <http://post.jagran.com/US-EU-to-intensify-sanctions-on-Russia-over-Ukraine-Obama-1410495131> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

³⁷ Reuters, 'Russia bans all US food in sanctions response', *Hindustan Times*, 2014, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/russia-bans-all-us-food-eu-fruit-and-veg-in-sanctions-response-nato-fears-invasion/article1-1249165.aspx> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

³⁸ 'India, European Union may resume Free Trade Agreement talks', *Dainik Jagran*, 2015, <http://post.jagran.com/India-European-Union-may-resume-Free-Trade-Agreement-talks-1421750146> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

³⁹ M. Holland et al, 'The EU...', op.cit., p. 289.

⁴⁰ R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, 'The European Union...', op.cit., p. 202 and R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, 'The Public...', op.cit., pp. 335–336.

ruling against Google.⁴¹ The EU was also presented as a legislator in other fields, with articles reporting on, inter alia, food safety rules, drug bans, and car safety laws. The EU was presented occasionally, within the frame of social actor, as a ‘normative actor’ – acting in such a way to promote its own normative principles.⁴² This is visible in the EU’s promotion of international human rights and the rule of law in Pakistan – ‘Pakistan executes 4 death row prisoners’.⁴³ The EU was framed as a ‘political actor’ in 21 per cent of articles. This often presented the EU as a diplomatic mediator, such as with reference to the EU’s role in the Ukraine crisis⁴⁴ and in the Iran nuclear talks.⁴⁵

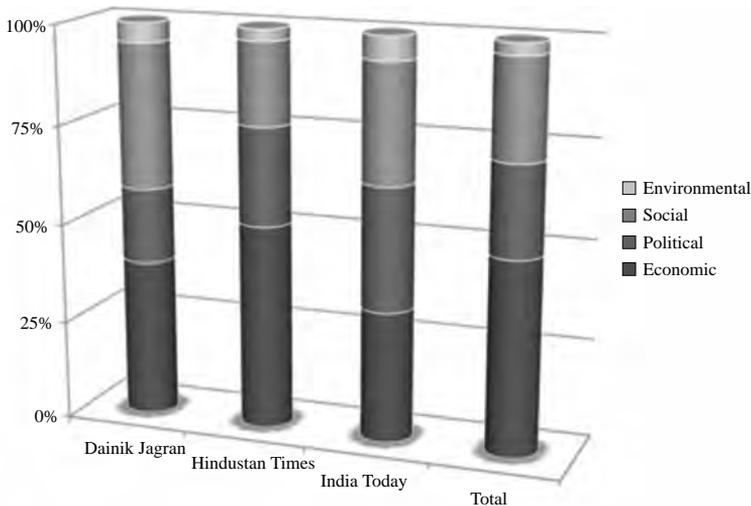


Figure 2 EU news: frames

Source: own calculation.

This represents a small evolution in the way the EU is framed, with a higher percentage of articles framing it as a social or political actor in comparison with previous

⁴¹ ‘Google-appointed panel to recommend right to be forgotten in EU only’, *India Today*, 2015, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/education/story/google-appointed-panel-to-recommend-right-to-be-forgotten-in-eu-only/1/417588.html> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁴² I. Manners, ‘Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?’, *JCMS*, 2002, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 235–58.

⁴³ ‘Pakistan executes 4 death row prisoners’, *India Today*, 2015, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/pakistan-execution-four-convicts/1/426541.html> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁴⁴ AFP, ‘Shaky Ukraine truce holds except around flashpoint town’, *Hindustan Times*, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/shaky-ukraine-truce-holds-except-around-flashpoint-town/article1-1317227.aspx> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁴⁵ AP, ‘Nuclear deal: World powers, Iran seal breakthrough framework’, *India Today*, 2015, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/iran-nuclear-deal-us-world-powers/1/428180.html> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

studies. Holland found how 'perceptions of the EU as a political actor that is growing in importance, as a champion of international human rights [...] remain very much in the shadows of public attention'.⁴⁶ And in Jain and Pandey's 2009 study, economic actor was the overwhelmingly dominant frame applied to the EU in the Indian media.⁴⁷ It is interesting to consider whether this change in the way the EU is framed is a result of an increased global presence as a political and social actor or rather a reflection of its diminishing position as an economic one. For there are evident contradictions with the way in which India perceives the EU mainly as an economic actor – despite the EU's position as a major economic powerhouse and India's largest trading partner, only two per cent of Indians consider that the EU countries are the leading economic power globally.⁴⁸ Lisbonne-de Vergeron, writing about the Indian perception of Europe based on elite interviews, found that Europe's reputation in India as an economic power had been damaged by the financial crisis, the crash having been seen to have exposed 'latent weakness and stagnation in Europe'.⁴⁹ When considering these changing perceptions, in addition to the overall reduction in visibility afforded to the EU compared to Jain and Pandey's study, it is possible that the EU is being granted less coverage as an economic actor, meaning its framing as a political or social actor appears more common.

The least common frame attributed to the EU is that of 'environmental actor', presented as such in only seven articles, three per cent of the total. This finding is in contrast with Jain and Pandey, who found, in 2009, 'environmental actor' to be the second most common frame applied to the EU in the Indian media.⁵⁰ This perhaps shows only how environmental news tends to be concentrated on specific landmark events – the UN Climate Change Convention Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen happened to occur during Jain and Pandey's research period. It is thus expected that the framing of the EU as an environmental actor would increase later in 2015, in reference to the upcoming Paris conference.

EU news: focus of centrality

The measure of centrality shows that the EU is the main focus in 44 per cent of the articles, the figure being even higher in the HT and DJ. Some effort is made to explain EU issues, with two articles in the HT specifically addressing EU–India relations – 'EU pins hopes on Modi to boost ties with India,'⁵¹ and 'In economic terms, the EU should

⁴⁶ M. Holland et al, 'The EU...', op.cit., p. 289.

⁴⁷ R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, 'The European Union...', op.cit., p. 202 and R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, 'The Public...', op.cit., p. 336.

⁴⁸ G. Sachdeva, 'Evaluation of...', op.cit., p. 10.

⁴⁹ K. Lisbonne-de Vergeron, 'Chinese and...', op.cit., p. 20.

⁵⁰ R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, 'The European Union...', op.cit., p. 202 and R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, 'The Public...', op.cit., p. 336.

⁵¹ K. Dasgupta, 'EU pins hopes on Modi to boost ties with India, but obstacles remain', *Hindustan Times*, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/eu-leaders-pin-hopes-on-modi-for-bettering-ties/article1-1326443.aspx> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

matter a lot more'.⁵² The DJ also ran an article about the appointment of Donald Tusk as Council President, 'EU needs long-term Russia strategy lasting years – Tusk'.⁵³ This focus of centrality contrasts with Jain and Pandey's 2009 study, where the EU was more often than not a minor actor in news items.⁵⁴ This results in an interesting incongruence – though the EU is afforded very little coverage in the Indian media, when mentioned it is often as the central actor in a news item. The focus of centrality therefore somewhat contradicts the perception that the EU is considered insignificant by the Indian media.

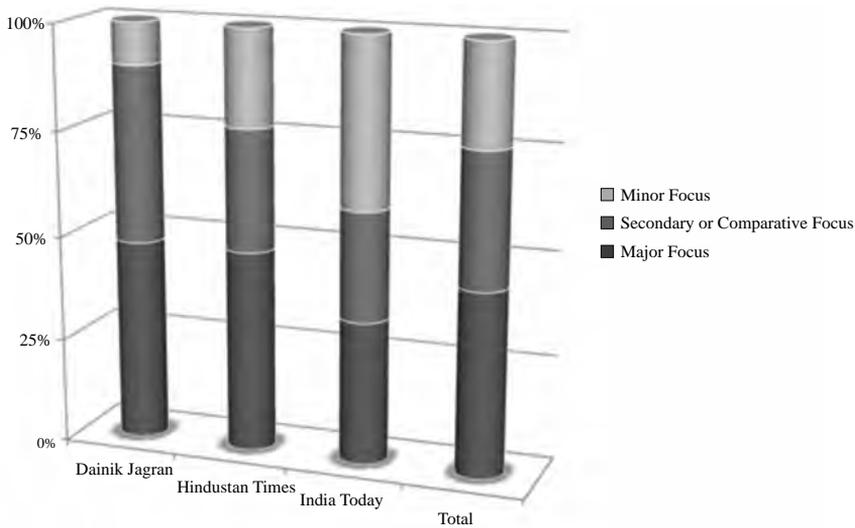


Figure 3 EU news: focus of centrality

Source: own calculation.

However, within these articles, where it was the central focus, the EU was portrayed more often in a negative manner – two articles of positive tone and eight negative. While the focus of centrality may therefore suggest that the EU is perceived as a main and significant actor, it also shows that this coverage may disproportionately spread the perception that the EU is a troubled or declining power.

⁵² G. Sachdeva, 'In economic...', op.cit.

⁵³ 'EU needs long-term Russia strategy lasting 'years': Tusk', *Dainik Jagran*, 2014, <http://post.jagran.com/EU-needs-longterm-Russia-strategy-lasting-years-Tusk-1418952469> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁵⁴ R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, 'The European Union...', op.cit., p. 202 and R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, 'The Public...', op.cit., pp. 335–336.

EU news: focus of domesticity

The focus of domesticity reveals that EU based events and issues command little attention in the Indian online news, accounting for only about one quarter of the articles, a trend common across all the three sites. This would, somewhat contrary to the focus of centrality, again suggest that the EU is perceived as relatively insignificant and therefore not often worthy of media attention. A feature of the few items which did report on EU domestic issues was that they were often negative in tone, with two articles presenting the EU positively and eight negatively – EU based news is therefore not only infrequent but also unflattering. The Mediterranean ‘migrant crisis’ and the EU’s reaction was the most common topic amongst the EU based news, articles such as ‘Europe’s migrant crisis: EU’s funds not enough, say critics’,⁵⁵ being typical of the coverage. Reporting of this kind is an accurate reflection of a perception identified in previous research – that Europe is a declining power, facing a growing number of existential crises. Lisbonne-de Vergeron, in her 2007 study, found that Europe is seen as outdated, inward looking and as having an image of being socially and culturally protectionist.⁵⁶ That the Indian media focused so much attention on the migrant crisis in Europe would seem to represent a manifestation of these sentiments.

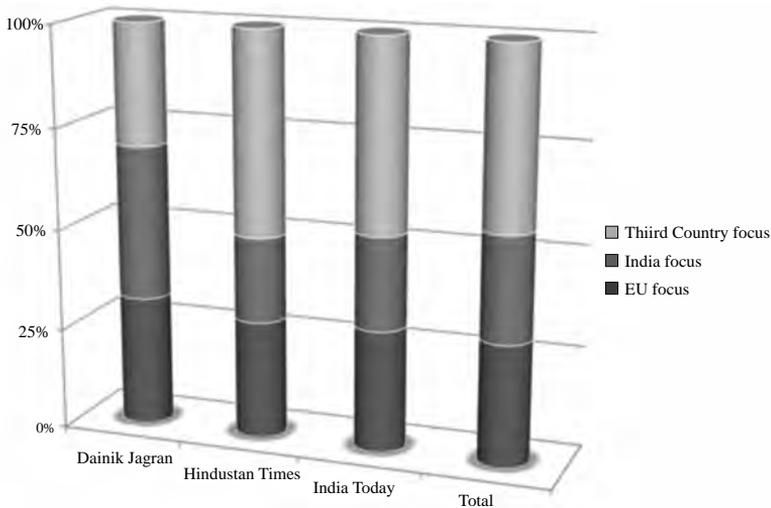


Figure 4 EU news: focus of domesticity

Source: own calculation.

⁵⁵ P. Sonwalkar, ‘Europe’s migrant crisis: EU’s funds not enough, say critics’, *Hindustan Times*, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/europe-s-migrant-crisis-eu-s-offer-of-more-funds-not-enough-say-critics/article1-1341108.aspx> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁵⁶ K. Lisbonne-de Vergeron, ‘Contemporary Indian...’, *op.cit.*, pp. 34, 40.

India-based news mentioning the EU also only represents about one quarter of the total coverage, although this was higher in the DJ (38 per cent) – Jain and Pandey having previously recognised that the DJ tends to focus principally on domestic issues.⁵⁷ Articles based on Indian issues also often presented the EU negatively (three positive against eight negative), perhaps reflecting existing problems in India–EU relations – for example, as a long-time ally of Russia, India has been unwilling to cooperate with the EU’s policy of sanctioning Russia.⁵⁸ However, the most visible of these frictions was the trade dispute regarding the EU’s ban on the import of Indian mangoes. Although this was, on the face of it, a minor dispute – the EU market for mangoes is worth less than €8 million annually to India⁵⁹ – it gained a disproportionate level of coverage. In ‘India asks EU to lift mango import ban’⁶⁰ the DJ portrays the EU as insensitive, accused of unilaterally imposing the ban without consulting or warning the Indian authorities.

A reported disagreement between the EU and India, of potentially much greater magnitude, relates to the Italian marines who await trial in India. Having begun as a bilateral issue between India and Italy, it has now certainly impacted upon EU–India relations. The EU has involved itself in efforts to end the crisis, efforts not always appreciated in India. In January 2015, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for the repatriation of the marines, which was reported in the HT as being received with ‘disapproval’ by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs.⁶¹ Federica Mogherini, initially involved as Italy’s foreign minister, has since been appointed the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission – a de facto foreign minister. The HT reported that Mogherini’s experience with India on the Italian marines case was a major reason for the non-realisation of an Indo–EU summit during Modi’s visit to Europe.⁶² While diplomatically India and the EU strive to be partners, indeed strategic partners, incidents such as these are likely to contribute to a perception in India that the relationship is a fragile one. As these issues are allowed to grow, and in some cases become personal, it is unsurprising that the Indian media portray the EU as the troublemaker which in time contributes to a more clearly negative perception of the EU.

⁵⁷ R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, ‘The European Union...’, op.cit., p. 198 and R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, ‘The Public...’, op.cit., p. 335.

⁵⁸ PTI, ‘European Union seeks India’s help on Ukraine’, *Hindustan Times*, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/european-union-seeks-india-s-help-on-ukraine/article1-1318296.aspx> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁵⁹ ‘EU lifts ban on import of mangoes from India’, *Dainik Jagran*, 2015, <http://post.jagran.com/EU-lifts-ban-on-import-of-mangoes-from-India-1421766225> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁶⁰ ‘India asks EU to lift mango import ban’, *Dainik Jagran*, 2014, <http://post.jagran.com/India-asks-EU-to-lift-mango-import-ban-1398914805> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁶¹ P. Sonwalkar, ‘India frowns at EU resolution on Italian marines’, *Hindustan Times*, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-disapproves-eu-resolution-on-italian-marines/article1-1307330.aspx> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁶² ‘PM Modi’s plan...’, *Hindustan Times*, op.cit.

The EU was mentioned most commonly, in 44 per cent of articles, with regard to issues based in third countries. This was frequently with regard to the Ukraine crisis, Russian sanctions and Iranian nuclear talks, but it also included articles about ASEAN, Bangladesh, China, DR Congo, Israel, Pakistan, Palestine, South Korea and Sri Lanka. Interestingly, it was with regard to these third country issues that the EU was most commonly presented in a positive manner – 8 positive articles against four negative. This positive portrayal occurred typically when the EU was acting as, in Holland’s words, ‘a champion of international human rights’,⁶³ or perhaps alternatively as a ‘normative power’, for example, to condemn ‘Bangladesh Violence: Thirty-four people died in vote protest’.⁶⁴ Other articles, such as ‘South Korea is expected to launch the 2nd largest Carbon Market in the world’,⁶⁵ which praises the EU’s carbon market as being the model, also presented the EU positively. The focus of domesticity therefore shows that although the EU may be perceived as having problems at home, it is capable of having a positive influence globally. It is interesting that this global influence is presented positively by the Indian media – Lisbonne-de Vergeron, in her perception study based on elite interviews, found that the way the EU stresses its values abroad ‘does not appeal to India.’⁶⁶

EU institutions and officials

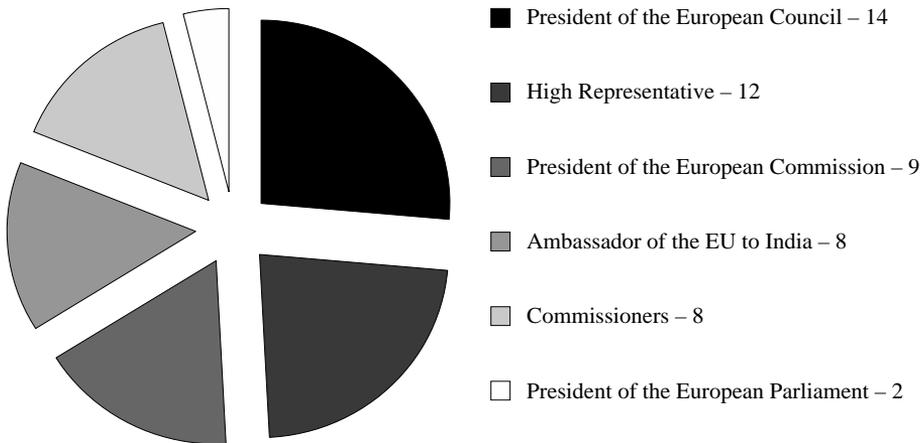


Figure 5 Visibility of EU officials (total mentions)

Source: own calculation.

⁶³ M. Holland et al, ‘The EU...’, op.cit., p. 289.

⁶⁴ ‘Bangladesh Violence: Thirty-four People died in vote protest’, *India Today*, 2015, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/education/story/bangladesh-violence-thirty-four-people-died-in-vote-protest/1/415209.html> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁶⁵ ‘South Korea...’, *India Today*, op.cit.

⁶⁶ K. Lisbonne-de Vergeron, ‘Contemporary Indian...’, op.cit., p. 7.

EU officials and leaders lack visibility in the Indian media, with 74 per cent of EU news items failing to mention a single EU official. Federica Mogherini, the EU's de facto foreign minister, featured in only 12 articles during the research period, equating to on average one mention per month. João Cravinho, the EU's Ambassador in India, was mentioned even less frequently, in only eight articles. This would suggest that these individuals – in theory the faces of the EU in India – are perceived as relatively unimportant with little standing.



Figure 6 Tusk and Juncker, Juncker and Tusk

Source: *Dainik Jagran*

There is clearly confusion in the Indian media as to the role of the EU's three Presidents. Each was at different times mentioned with regard to international issues, therefore overlapping with the role of Mogherini. There is also an innate problem of understanding with regard to the distinction between the presidents. This was best represented in the DJ, its article about the appointment of Donald Tusk as Council President being mistakenly accompanied by a picture of Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the Commission. The labelling of Donald Tusk (or Jean-Claude Juncker) merely as the 'new EU President' underlines this problem of comprehension. This confusion has been recognised in previous literature, Lisbonne-de Vergeron, showing how Indians perceive the EU leadership to be overly fragmented, meaning that the EU struggles

to communicate with a single, unified voice – a perception that is unlikely to have changed.⁶⁷

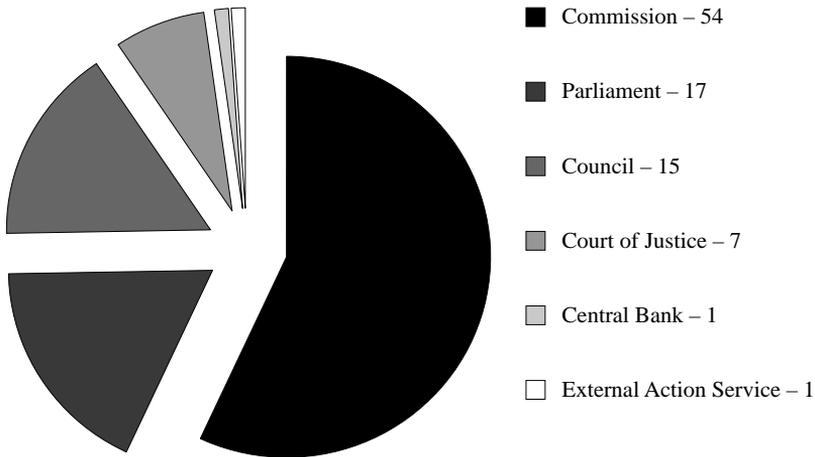


Figure 7 Visibility of EU institutions (total mentions)

Source: own calculation.

The EU institutions received considerably more attention than the officials who represent them, with at least one institution being mentioned in 41 per cent of articles. The European Commission is, by some margin, the most visible of the EU institutions, contributing more than half of the total mentions. It is interesting to note the increased visibility of other institutions, with both the European Parliament and Court of Justice of the EU being referred to on numerous occasions, in contrast to the research of Jain and Pandey, in 2009, when they received no coverage at all.⁶⁸ These findings are somewhat contradictory – with regard to EU officials, it seems that the Indian media continue to find the EU hierarchy a mystery, yet increased visibility of EU institutions would suggest an increase in comprehension. The relatively high level of visibility afforded to the Commission, in comparison with EU officials, is perhaps a reflection of the English perception of the EU. In the English press, the Commission is frequently described as resembling a ‘faceless bureaucracy, an army of anonymous eurocrats’ (in the words of the Commission itself!).⁶⁹ Reference therefore to ‘The Commission’ can be an umbrella term used to prevent the need for more in depth explanation of EU developments. That the Indian media mention

⁶⁷ K. Lisbonne-de Vergeron, ‘Chinese and...’, op.cit., p. 63.

⁶⁸ R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, ‘The European Union...’, op.cit., p. 201 and R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, ‘The Public...’, op.cit., p. 336.

⁶⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/work_with_eu/index_en.htm (accessed on 5 August 2015).

the Commission three times more often than any single EU official would seem to confirm the prevalence of this perception – that the EU is a ‘faceless’ organisation, better known for its institutions than its people.

The Indian perception of France, Germany and the UK

The EU’s three most populous Member States receive far more exposure in the Indian media than the EU itself, the articles published in the month of April 2015 alone eclipsing the number of EU news items across 11 months. The month of April was of course extraordinary, with Prime Minister Modi’s visit to Europe, which included stops in France and Germany, receiving much media attention – reporting of the visit accounted for more than one third of the total sample of 221 articles. France was the most visible during the research period, being mentioned in 85 articles, Germany the least visible – mentioned in only 62 articles, with the UK being mentioned in 74.

Given that France and Germany received extra coverage due to Modi’s visit, it is somewhat surprising that their level of visibility is not far above the UK’s. It seems that the Indian media maintains a rooted interest in reporting UK news, although there is some debate in the literature as to the reasons for this. Jain and Pandey argue, as previously mentioned, that this merely reflects the residual ‘Anglo-American imagery’ in the Indian press, present since independence.⁷⁰ Lisbonne-de Vergeron, however, contends that this interest is a reflection of contemporary rather than historical circumstance – it is the large Indian diaspora currently present in the UK that results in a high visibility of UK news in the Indian media.⁷¹

When reporting on French, German, and UK news, the sites were, in comparison with their coverage of the EU, much more reliant on their own correspondents – with the DJ again, correctly or not, attributing all of its news to the ‘Jagran Post News Desk’. In the IT and HT about 60 per cent of French, German and UK news was written by their own staff, maybe reflecting how France, Germany and the UK are seen as more significant actors, worthy of closer attention. This is, however, also naturally a result of the exceptional interest created by the visit of Modi to Europe, with both the HT and IT sending correspondents to follow Modi’s tour. As already mentioned, the HT has a permanent correspondent in London, reflecting the constant interest in UK news. As a result, the reliance on news agencies was reduced in both organisations, representing only around one quarter of the IT’s coverage and a third of the HT’s.

The Indian media framed France as an economic actor in more than 50 per cent of the articles. This was mostly in reference to the deal struck between Modi and French President François Hollande for the purchase by India of 36 Rafale jet planes – ‘India

⁷⁰ R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, ‘The European Union...’, *op.cit.* and R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, ‘The Public...’, *op.cit.*, p. 332.

⁷¹ K. Lisbonne-de Vergeron, ‘Contemporary Indian...’, *op.cit.*

to buy 36 Rafale jets from France.⁷² The deal was the main focus of 13 articles, India and France having been in protracted talks regarding the deal, originally for the purchase of 126 planes, for over three years. A number of other articles framed France as an economic actor; reporting on the announcement that France will invest two billion euro in India⁷³ and that French National Railways will assist India's high speed rail project.⁷⁴ France was framed as a political actor in around 25 per cent of the articles, reflecting a number of further agreements made during Modi's visit – with regards to visas⁷⁵ and nuclear energy.⁷⁶

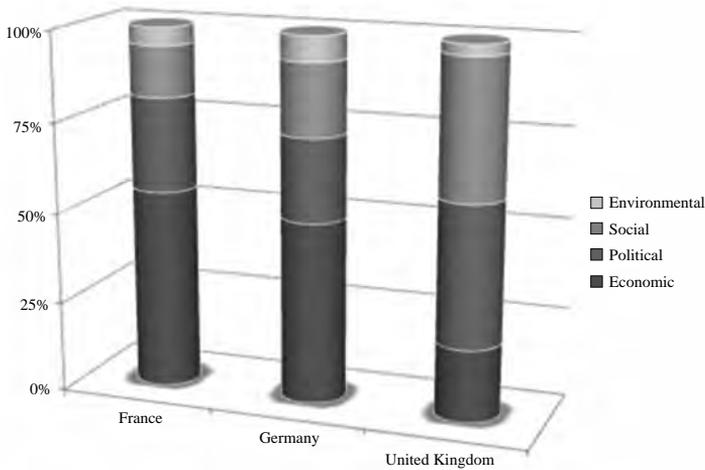


Figure 8 French, German and UK News: frames

Source: own calculation.

Germany was also presented as an economic actor in 50 per cent of articles. Again, much of the coverage was of course related to Modi's visit to Germany, a trip about which the Indian Ministry of External Affairs declared 'business is 1st in order of

⁷² 'India to buy 36 Rafale jets from France: PM Modi says after talks with French President', *Dainik Jagran*, 2015, <http://post.jagran.com/india-to-buy-36-rafale-jets-from-france-pm-modi-says-after-talks-with-french-president-1428640586> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁷³ 'France to...', *India Today*, op.cit.

⁷⁴ French connection to speed up Delhi-Chandigarh train travel', *Dainik Jagran*, 2015, <http://post.jagran.com/french-connection-to-speed-up-delhichandigarh-train-travel-1428831100> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁷⁵ P. Sonwalkar, 'French visa for Indians in 48 hours', *Hindustan Times*, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/french-visa-for-indians-in-48-hours/article1-1336331.aspx> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁷⁶ 'Modi in France: List of agreements signed', *India Today*, 2015, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/modi-in-france-list-of-agreements-signed/1/429575.html> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

priority'.⁷⁷ A number of articles were dedicated to the 'Hannover Messe', an industrial trade fair, which Modi attended to front the 'Make in India' investment campaign.⁷⁸ Another article reported on Modi's roundtable meeting with top business CEOs and attendance at the India–German business summit.⁷⁹ Germany was framed both as a political actor and social actor in around 20 per cent of articles, with a slightly higher frequency of environmental actorness, in comparison with France and the UK, reflecting how climate change and renewable energy cooperation featured as a higher priority in Germany.⁸⁰ It is intriguing that both France and Germany were presented predominantly as economic actors. France is generally perceived as India's key strategic partner in Europe, with strong cooperation in strategic political areas such as defence and civil nuclear programme, while Germany is frequently perceived as the commercial hub of Europe. It seems likely that the long awaited, and well documented, Rafale jets deal contributed largely to France's framing during this period.

The way in which the UK was framed was noticeably different to France and Germany, with only around one in five articles portraying the UK as an economic actor. The HT reported Prime Minister David Cameron's offer to 'Make in India', in effect a rival bid to sell jets to India.⁸¹ The UK was far more frequently, in around 40 per cent of articles, framed as a political actor, reflecting the dominant issue in the UK at the time – the upcoming general election to be held on 7 May 2015 (the timing of the election was the primary reason why Modi's Euro-tour did not stop in London).⁸² Interestingly, a section of this coverage focused specifically on the role of the Indian diaspora in the election, the HT reporting on how Indians were likely to vote,⁸³ how the parties were trying to 'woo' the Indian community,⁸⁴ and the increasing number of

⁷⁷ 'Modi in Germany: Holds roundtable meeting with top German CEOs', *India Today*, 2015, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/modi-germany-hannover-roundtable-meeting-german-ceos-messe-fair/1/429761.html> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁷⁸ IANS, 'Modi, Merkel inaugurate India pavilion at Hannover fair', *India Today*, 2015, <http://india-today.intoday.in/story/modi-merkel-inaugurate-india-pavilion-at-hannover-fair/1/429843.html> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁷⁹ 'Modi in Germany...', *India Today*, op.cit.

⁸⁰ 'Narendra Modi in Germany: 6 things the PM said', *India Today*, 2015, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/pm-modi-in-germany-6-things-the-pm-said/1/430115.html> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁸¹ P. Sonwalkar, 'Cameron offers to "Make in India" Eurofighter Typhoon', *Hindustan Times*, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/cameron-offers-to-make-in-india-eurofighter-typhoon/article1-1342139.aspx> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁸² D. R. Chaudhury, 'Narendra Modi's London visit: Trip to take place after UK polls', *The Economic Times (India)*, 2015, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-12-25/news/57395616_1_uk-polls-prime-minister-narendra-modi-indian-pm (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁸³ P. Sonwalkar, 'Indians in UK do not vote as a bloc: GP Hinduja', *Hindustan Times*, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/indians-in-uk-do-not-vote-as-a-bloc-gp-hinduja/article1-1339621.aspx> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁸⁴ P. Sonwalkar, 'New India dynamics in UK poll manifestos', *Hindustan Times*, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/new-india-dynamics-in-uk-poll-manifestos/article1-1337714.aspx> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

Indian parliamentary candidates.⁸⁵ This therefore confirms, to some extent, Lisbonne-de Vergeron's observation that much of the Indian media's interest in the UK is due to the diaspora rather than historical reasons.

An interesting side-story was the portrayal of the Eurosceptic sentiment present in the election campaign, the HT reporting how anti-EU sentiment could be a positive for India – UKIP leader Nigel Farage declaring his preference for Indian migrants over Europeans.⁸⁶ Such rhetoric is likely to be popular in India as there is growing frustration about UK visa rules for students and post-study work.⁸⁷ This follows a trend present in previous literature, a 2011 Indian perception study, again by Lisbonne-de Vergeron, found that Indians perceive Britain to be a peripheral figure in Europe with little influence, in direct contrast to France and Germany. This allows Britain to retain close cooperative links with the rest of the world, particularly the commonwealth nations such as India. Lisbonne-de Vergeron noticed therefore a possible conflict arising in British foreign policy between further European integration and its linkages with Commonwealth partners,⁸⁸ a debate which the Indian media seem to have picked up on. It is interesting to note that reporting of this Eurosceptic sentiment in the UK was chiefly to be found in the HT – the only site to have a permanent correspondent in London – perhaps confirming how this can result in more negative perceptions of the EU arriving in the Indian media.

Conclusions

Figure 9 below, from the Pew Research Centre's 2014 Global Attitudes Survey, makes for interesting reading (although it is worth clarifying that the survey took place *before* Russia's annexation of Crimea). With only 34 per cent of those surveyed holding a favourable opinion of the EU, the Union finds itself sandwiched between China and Iran in the Indian league table of agreeable world powers. It is, on the face of it, a remarkable finding. And yet, as this study has shown, on closer inspection it is perhaps not a complete surprise. During the 11 month research period there were, across the three sites, only 13 articles that presented the EU in a positive light, with the Indian media far more likely to focus on negative issues related to the EU. When the Indian media reported on European topics, it confounded the previously found perceptions about Europe being in decline, with the EU often depicted at the centre of crises such as 'Grexit' and Mediterranean migration. When reporting on bilateral

⁸⁵ P. Sonwalkar, 'UK now realises Indian votes matter: Swraj Paul ahead of polls', *Hindustan Times*, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/uk-now-realises-indian-votes-matter-swraj-paul-ahead-of-polls/article1-1332993.aspx> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁸⁶ P. Sonwalkar, 'UK poll surprise: Anti-immigrant party prefers Indians to Eastern Europeans', *Hindustan Times*, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/poll-surprise-anti-immigrant-ukip-prefers-indians-to-eastern-europeans/article1-1340242.aspx> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁸⁷ P. Sonwalkar, 'UK now realises...', *op.cit.*

⁸⁸ K. Lisbonne-de Vergeron, 'Chinese and...', *op.cit.*, p. 34.

EU–India issues, the EU was also often portrayed unflatteringly, and very rarely presented convincingly as an ally or partner of India.

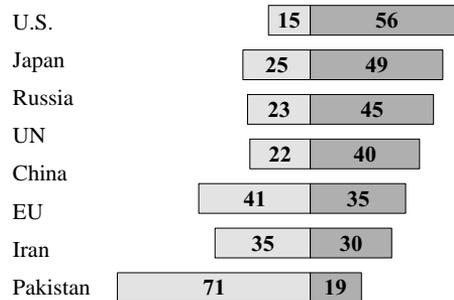


Figure 9 Indian attitudes toward the rest of the world

Source: Pew Research Center, Global Attitudes Survey

Of further interest is the percentage figure not displayed on the Global Attitudes survey graphic – the EU had the highest percentage (41 per cent) of respondents who had ‘no opinion’ of it at all, more than any of the other global powers. The results of this study would also seem to corroborate this finding. Although negative portrayals of the EU outnumbered positive ones in the Indian media, there were far more articles of neutral tone, totalling 82 per cent of the total sample. This could reflect a general tendency for the Indian media to report in a very objective manner, resulting in many neutral portrayals. It seems therefore that the Indian media, much like the respondents of the Global Attitudes survey, often have no opinion of the EU at all. It should also be remembered that the EU generally had a very low total level of visibility in the Indian media – mentioned in 17 articles per month on average, across the three sites. From the readers’ point of view, visibility and publicity generally equates to importance, therefore while the EU gains such little coverage in India it is likely to remain relatively insignificant.

It is clear then that the EU has an image problem in India. The above findings suggest that this problem is twofold, encompassing both disapproval and general indifference. The disapproval may reflect a lack of mutual knowledge between India and the EU. While the results of this study show that Indian understanding of the EU remains insufficient, there is also evidence to suggest that many misperceptions about India are to be found in Europe. Sachdeva recently reflected upon how ‘stories related to poverty, human rights abuses, rape, the rise of right-wing politics or exotic stories concerning tribal issues, yoga etc. are relatively more prevalent in the European media.’⁸⁹ Such rhetoric may create a harmful feedback loop, with the Indian media

⁸⁹ G. Sachdeva, ‘Evaluation of...’, *op.cit.*, p. 41.

retaliating by spreading negative views of Europe. It would be of great interest to conduct a reverse perception study – of how India is perceived in Europe – in order to substantiate or disprove these thoughts.

However, more than the occasional disapproval, it is the indifference towards the EU that represents the dominant perception in India. EU structural problems are contributing to this perception. EU relations are in competition with India's bilateral interactions with individual Member States rather than complimentary to them. Indian dialogue structures with the EU Member States are very similar to the ones used by the EU, with India preferring to engage with individual Member States due to simplicity (no need for EU consensus) and speed of negotiations⁹⁰ – note how Modi was able to sign 18 agreements during his short time in France.⁹¹ At a political level, India's tactic is therefore to move beyond the complex EU structure and strike bilateral initiatives with key power centres in the EU such as France and Germany.⁹² This also reflects a perception that France and Germany hold the real power in Europe, even at the EU level, shown by how Modi could be seen petitioning Merkel to reopen negotiations toward the proposed EU–India free-trade agreement.⁹³ While the Indian government so openly favours interaction at Member State level, the EU's profile will clearly suffer.

The indifference shown to the EU is also caused by the lack of visibility afforded to its officials, due to its fragmented and alien hierarchy. This is despite specific measures undertaken by the EU, such as the creation of the High Representative position by the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, aimed at providing the EU's foreign policy with a single, recognisable figurehead.⁹⁴ The Indian media did show a level of appreciation for the role filled by Mogherini, and she was the most visible of the EU officials. However, being mentioned in, on average, only one article per month means that she is unlikely to be a household name in India. It should not be underestimated how the role of individual personalities can influence perceptions in India. Modi's omnipresence in Indian politics has allowed him to gain celebrity status far beyond that of leaders in recent history – 'A Modi election delivered a Modi government', the Indian media mostly fawn.⁹⁵ The media 'fawning' continued when other world leaders visited New Delhi, especially at the arrival of US President Barack Obama in January 2015. Although Twitter followers, shown below in Table 1, may be something of a crude measure and an unfair direct comparison, as a reflection of public profile they are telling. That the

⁹⁰ S. A. Wülbers, 'The Paradox...', op.cit., p. 20.

⁹¹ 'Modi in France...', *India Today*, op.cit.

⁹² P. D. Samanta, 'Modi goes globe-plotting', *India Today*, 2015, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/obama-in-india-prime-minister-narendra-modi-eu-china-super-powers/1/419892.html> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁹³ 'EU FTA...', *PTI*, op.cit.

⁹⁴ R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, 'The European Union...', op.cit. and R. K. Jain and S. Pandey, 'The Public...', op.cit., p. 332.

⁹⁵ 'Special Report...', *The Economist*, op.cit., p. 4.

average Indian cannot recognise an EU leader can to some extent explain the sombre state of EU–India relations. Modi has looked to reassert India’s presence on the world stage by engaging the other global heavyweights; meetings with Russian, Chinese and Japanese leadership, huge public events in the US. These are much more effective at projecting an image of strength to the Indian people than meeting with relatively low profile (at least in India) EU officials.

Table 1 Leaders’ Twitter followers

Barack Obama	63,000,000
Narendra Modi	14,000,000
David Cameron	1,150,000
François Hollande	1,070,000
Donald Tusk	285,000
Jean-Claude Juncker	179,000
Federica Mogherini	159,000
João Cravinho	1,200

Source: Twitter.com

The research has also shown that the Indian media is to some extent responsible for the indifference felt towards the EU. The almost total absence of Indian journalists in Brussels is a contributing factor – for the EU to be recognised as globally significant and have its image projected positively, it requires journalists to have a reasonable comprehension of the EU as an actor. The EU itself clearly recognises this, and has taken tentative steps to improve understanding – an in-depth article on the EU–India relationship titled ‘EU leaders pin hopes on Modi for bettering ties’ was published by the HT from a writer in Brussels on invitation from the EU.⁹⁶ However, there is ‘chicken-egg’ conundrum at play here – the Indian media largely ignore the EU because it is perceived as insignificant by the Indian public, while the Indian public perceive the EU as insignificant because the Indian media largely ignore it.

Looking to the future, there are a number of ways in which the Indian perception of the EU may be improved. Clearly an increase in mutual understanding would be of benefit to both sides – an interesting avenue is the potential role for the Indian diaspora in Europe to act as bridge between the two partners. The Indian diaspora in the US may act as a model, the increasingly influential Indian caucus ensure that politicians and the public more frequently hear and understand the needs of India.⁹⁷ The most receptive audience may well be found in the UK, where a record number

⁹⁶ K. Dasgupta, ‘EU pins...’, *op.cit.*

⁹⁷ S. A. Wüllbers, ‘The Paradox...’, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

of Indian-origin candidates (10) won parliamentary seats in the 2015 election.⁹⁸ As well as increasing political leverage, such a trend may help contribute to better mutual understanding between India and the EU.

However, beyond increased understanding, the most effective way for the EU to raise its profile and popularity in India is through expanded visible cooperation – actions speak louder than words. Modi has already shown this, his election victory was built upon his reputation – rightly or not – as a ‘do-er’ during his previous tenure as Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat. It now seems likely that a high-level EU–India summit will take place in the first half of 2016,⁹⁹ offering an ideal opportunity to deepen cooperation and showcase the strength of the partnership. It is important, however, that the summit results in concrete and communicable outcomes that allow the Indian media to present the EU positively and as a significant partner. Progress toward the BTIA would clearly send the strongest message. It has been suggested that negotiations toward the BTIA could be completed in areas where agreement is possible, leaving more troublesome aspects to be finalised subsequently.¹⁰⁰ A high-level summit would also create the necessary conditions for the EU and India to rectify some of the negativity in relations, for example: by finding an acceptable solution to the Italian marines case.

Perceptions are not set in stone. The crucial factor that will determine EU–India relations in the coming years is the political will of the leaders on both sides. Should interests align and cooperation expand, the EU's importance to India will increase and the indifference and negativity currently identifiable in India may be, at least partly, forgotten.

⁹⁸ PTI, ‘Record number of Indian-origin MPs elected to UK parliament’, *The Times of India*, 2015, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/nri/other-news/Record-number-of-Indian-origin-MPs-elected-to-UK-parliament/articleshow/47207051.cms> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

⁹⁹ IANS, ‘EU India summit expected by end of 2015’, *The Hindu*, 2015, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/eu-india-summit-expected-by-end-of-2015/article7326133.ece> (accessed on 5 August 2015).

¹⁰⁰ G. Sachdeva, ‘Evaluation of...’, *op.cit.*, pp. 41–42.

