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Q4(c)

Explain India's relations with the European Union in the context of Brexit

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · PSIR GS 2 · 15 marks · Changing International Political Order

Changing International Political Order: Rise of super powers; strategic and ideological Bipolarity, arms race and Cold War; Nuclear threat; Non-aligned movement; Collapse of the Soviet Union; Unipolarity and American hegemony; relevance of non-alignment in the contemporary world.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss India-EU relations in the context of Brexit
- Write at 15-mark length

Revision summary

The **2004 strategic partnership** was with the EU including the UK.

Brexit split trade law, origin rules, and political access into two files.

An India-UK FTA became a distinct opportunity.

The EU bloc remains the larger market and climate partner.

India's interest is to run both tracks, not to pick a substitute Europe.

Introduction

Brexit took the United Kingdom out of the European Union in 2020. India then faced two Western European partners instead of one legal market. Relations with Brussels and with London had to be re-specified without abandoning the older strategic partnership with the EU.

Body

Before Brexit

- The 2004 India-EU strategic partnership covered trade, climate, and multilateralism.
- A broad-based FTA stayed stuck on movement of professionals, automobiles, wines, and procurement.
- The UK inside the EU was a voice for openness to India in some dossiers and a complication in others.

What Brexit changed

- India must negotiate a Union of 27 and a separate UK. Rules of origin and financial passports split.
- **Opportunity:** a faster India-UK FTA track became thinkable once London could move without the 27.
- **Risk:** a weaker EU political union, or a preoccupied Brussels, could slow the India-EU FTA still further.

- Diaspora, education, and services links with Britain remain thick; they are now bilateral, not Union law.

Continuities

- Climate, data, maritime security, and a shared interest in a rules-based order still point to Brussels.
- The EU remains India's large trading partner as a bloc. That arithmetic did not vanish with the UK's exit.
- Values talk on human rights and Russian energy later sat beside trade. In 2021 the immediate file was still FTA architecture after Brexit.

Strategic reading

- **Multi-alignment:** India can use London as a gateway on some security and mobility issues and Brussels on climate and standards.
- Keohane-style complex interdependence with Europe is now two bargains, not one.

Flow diagram

Brexit -> India-India-EU 27 FTA climate 27 FTA climate
Brexit -> India-India-UK bilateral FTA mobility bilateral FTA mobility
India-EU 27 FTA climate -> Re-wired Europe policy
India-UK bilateral FTA mobility -> Re-wired Europe policy

Conclusion

Brexit doubled India's European negotiation without ending the EU partnership. The prize is two trade and political tracks. The cost is complexity and a possible further delay in the Brussels FTA. Context is re-wiring, not a rupture with Europe.

Facts & figures

Brexit 2020

UK withdrawal from the EU; India lost a member-State inside Union decision-making.

2004 strategic partnership

The political frame of India-EU relations still cited after the UK's exit.

India-EU FTA

Long-stalled Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement talks that Brexit did not by itself conclude.

India-UK track

Separate post-Brexit trade and mobility negotiations with London.