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Q6(c)

The tariff threats have pushed India and the European Union closer. Evaluate the India-EU partnership

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · PSIR GS 2 · 15 marks · Comparative Politics

Comparative Politics: Nature and major approaches; political economy and political sociology perspectives; limitations of the comparative method.

Core demand of the question

- State how 2025 U.S. tariff threats pushed India and the EU to accelerate talks
- **Evaluate the partnership:** trade, **TTC**, climate, values, Russia/Ukraine, human-rights friction
- **Give a balanced grade:** closer, not yet a finished FTA bloc

Revision summary

U.S. reciprocal tariffs in 2025 threatened both Indian and EU exports and compressed FTA timelines.

The partnership already includes **TTC**, climate talk, student mobility and a values vocabulary.

Friction remains on agriculture, data, **CBAM**, Russia and human-rights politics.

Directionally closer is true; a finished trade-and-tech pole is not yet true.

India-EU is the best Western hedge if Washington stays protectionist, not a substitute for U.S. defence enablers.

Introduction

Trump-era reciprocal tariffs in 2025 threatened both Indian exports and the European Union's Atlantic market. Shared pain is a diplomat's opportunity. India and the EU were already negotiating a **trade and investment** package that had stalled since the late 2000s. The tariff shock did push them **closer**. Evaluation must ask: closer to what - a deal, a technology club, or a press conference?

Body

The push

When the United States prices market access as a political favour, second-largest relationships gain value. The EU needs buyers for cars, machinery and green tech. India needs capital, chips, and a hedge against a protectionist Washington. The **Trade and Technology Council (TTC)**, resumed FTA/BIT/GIs talks, and cooperation on **CBAM** explanations are the bureaucratic face of the jolt. Q4(c)'s European defence-industrial awakening and Q6(b)'s FOIP connectivity meet here: Europe looking east, India looking for rules that are not only American.

What the partnership already is

- **It is a values-adjacent relationship:** democracy, a talk of rules, climate diplomacy, and student mobility. It is a **market** relationship still below potential - cars, spirits, dairy, data and procurement are the usual fight. It is a **strategic relationship in infancy: maritime exercises with France more than with 'Brussels'; Germany's times-turn is national. On Russia,** Brussels wanted condemnation India would not give; the partnership survived by compartmentalisation. Human rights and agri-standards will remain European domestic politics, not a footnote.

Grade

The statement is **fair as direction**. Tariff threats compressed timelines and created a shared narrative of 'we are not vassals of the White House'. It is **too strong as achievement** until a FTA text is signed and until European capital shows up in Indian manufacturing at China-replacing scale. Carbon border taxes can still look, from Delhi, like green protectionism. From Brussels, Indian tariffs and quality control can look like the old Licence Raj in a new badge.

- **A realistic evaluation:** India-EU is the **most plausible Western hedge** if the U.S. stays tariff-nationalist. It will not replace the U.S. in defence enablers or the Gulf in energy. Closer, yes. A finished pole, not yet.

Flow diagram

US tariff threats 2025 -> India-EU talks
 India-EU talks -> Trade and Technology Council
 India-EU talks -> FTA / BIT / BIT
 FTA / BIT -> Hedge not replacement of US

Conclusion

Tariff threats pushed India and the EU into each other's arms as markets and as rule-seekers. The partnership is real in talks and in **TTC**. It becomes historic only when a trade deal and technology transfer survive the next domestic veto on both sides.

Facts & figures

TTC

India-EU Trade and Technology Council: a structured talk shop on standards, chips and resilient supply chains.

Stalled FTA

Broad-based trade talks launched in 2007, suspended, and revived in the 2020s - still the missing hard achievement.

CBAM

EU carbon border adjustment: climate policy in Europe, suspected green protectionism in New Delhi.

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