Bridging India and EU

Why in news?

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The upcoming visit to New Delhi of the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, will likely witness a frank Indo-European dialogue on the changing global and regional security environments.

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What are the areas of divergence?

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- Stalled negotiations over the **Free Trade Agreement**.
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- Mutual recriminations on combating climate change, and
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- Divergent positions on Russia's role during the Crimean crisis. As a result, the strategic partnership has been far from "strategic".
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What should be the area of focus?

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- Prime Minister Modi's visit to Brussels and the resumption of the EU-India summit in 2016 marked a turning point.
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- The summit saw a much stronger focus on security cooperation and the adoption of a joint declaration on counterterrorism.
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- So, pivoting around **"principled pragmatism**", the EU's new Global Strategy (2010) underlines the **"direct connection between European prosperity and Asian security".**
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- In their meetings, Ms. Mogherini and Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval should **focus on converging foreign**

policy priorities into coordinated or common practices.
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- Foremost is dealing with challenges in their shared extended neighbourhood, which stretches from Istanbul to Islamabad and from Moscow to Mauritius.
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- **This Eurasian arc of instability is of critical importance** to Brussels and New Delhi's aspirations to stabilise their regional peripheries.
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- Afghanistan would be the logical starting point. Political coordination through an EU-India-Afghanistan trilateral, with regular security consultations to exchange assessments, could be the first step in this direction.
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- The Indian Ocean region offers another potential area for cooperation.
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What about China?

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- With uncertainty surrounding American commitments and the formidable rise of China, the EU and India will also have to **stop ignoring the dragon in the room.**
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- Delhi is keen to counter China's European offensive, including €50 billion worth of investments since 2000, a dialogue with the EU on the Belt and Road initiative, and **the '16+1' mechanism** (a platform created in April 2012 by China and 16 Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries).
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- As Europe realises the costs of dependence on China, the EU must have a serious dialogue with India and other partners on how to pursue Eurasian connectivity plans that are truly multilateral and sustainable.
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What is the way ahead?

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- Finally, the EU and India also have similar stakes in stronger international institutions and a liberal order that protects global commons cooperatively.
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- If they agree to expand consultations on issues such as climate, trade and space, it is likely that Delhi and EU will find themselves agreeing far more times than usually expected.
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Source: The Hindu

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