

Issue Brief

July 2026
No: 521

**Strategic Synergy Between
India and the Nordic Nations
in a Changing World Order**

Khushboo Sen Dhuruv



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Abstract

India's growing strategic partnership with the European Union (EU) has not only strengthened its economic and trade engagement but also expanded security and defence cooperation in the growing geopolitical fragmentation. The evolving strategic dimension in the bilateral partnership reflects India's increasing footprint in Europe, especially in Northern Europe.

India's Prime Minister's visit to Norway for the third round of the India-Nordic Summit with five northern European countries, including Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland, not only expanded the scope of their relations but also widened and broadened India's engagement with the Nordic region. These five countries together represent the world's most advanced region in terms of economy, innovation, technology and sustainable development. India's move to strengthen a new strategic partnership with these Nordic nations offers valuable opportunities to connect by building a coalition on key global issues.

It also raises a key question: Why is India investing sustained diplomatic and strategic capital in the Nordic region, and what does this reveal about its broader European strategy beyond traditional partnerships with major powers? At a time of global geopolitical flux, economic fragmentations and rapid technological advancement, India-Nordic relations have been elevated to a "trusted Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership". This reflects a diplomatic shift in their bilateral relationship at multilateral platforms, securing national interest while supporting a resilient world order, which promotes peace, security and stability. However, the paper aims to examine India's engagement with the Nordic region as a broader strategy of diversification in Europe, expanding technological cooperation, advancing green transition goals, and enhancing strategic autonomy in a multipolar international order.

Keywords: India-Nordic Relations, India-Nordic Summit, Green Technology and Strategic Partnership, Sustainable Development and Resilient Economy

Introduction

In the beginning, India's relations with the five Nordic countries were primarily based on bilateral cooperation, with each country focusing on trade and investments, technology cooperation and renewable energy. However, this relationship, later transformed into a more

cohesive framework when the five Nordic nations (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland) collectively engaged with India at the first India-Summit, held in Sweden in 2018. This marked a shift in India's engagement with these countries, broadening its reach to the Nordic region and building strategic and economic cooperation. India's Prime Ministers' bilateral interactions with the Prime Ministers of the five Nordic nations at multilateral forums covered key issues related to "global security, economic growth, innovation and climate change". The leaders of all six countries highlighted the importance of free trade as a catalyst for inclusive growth and the achievement of sustainable development. The Nordic nations' innovation systems are extensively interlinked and are based on profound linkages among the public sector, private sector and academia. This approach could complement India's flagship programmes such as Make in India, Startup India, Digital India and Clean India. Therefore, open and inclusive trade remained key to Industry Transition. The Nordic region, which is advanced in digital innovation and clean technology, can provide the framework for India's Smart Cities program. The Nordic partners firmly supported India's application for membership of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG) and reaffirmed their support for India's bid for a permanent seat on the UNSC (MEA, 2018). Thus, India's reshaping of its foreign policy approach towards Europe, particularly through its engagement with the previously neglected region of Northern Europe, reflects a strategic shift in priorities, redefining its national interests and strengthening cooperation with evolving partners (Pant, 2018).

India's Bilateral Relations with Nordic Countries

Denmark: A Green Strategic Partner shares long-standing relations with India. Diplomatic relations were established in 1949, based on democratic values and their mutual aspiration for regional and international peace and stability. The establishment of the "Green Strategic Partnership" in 2020 has made the bilateral relations more cohesive and cordial in the field of climate action, green transition and sustainable development (MEA, 2020). Moreover, their bilateral discussion of the comprehensive "Energy Policy Dialogue" between India and Denmark to strengthen their cooperation "on cross-sectoral energy planning with a focus on green hydrogen, integration of renewable energy, energy storage and decarbonisation" (MEA, 2022). PM India Shri Narendra Modi's visit to Oslo, Norway, for the Third India-Nordic Summit, along with his bilateral meeting with Acting Prime Minister of Denmark H.E. Ms Mette Frederiksen, reaffirmed the progress in India-Denmark bilateral relations. The meeting ensured the continued advancement of the Made in India-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership, with a focus on promoting green growth, sustainable development and

collaboration on addressing global climate change challenges (MEA, 2025). Furthermore, both sides' leaders stressed the importance of enhancing mobility and partnership and expanding people-to-people exchange alongside stronger diplomatic alignment on climate governance in multilateral fora.

Finland: A Digital Strategic Partner, Finland has maintained friendly and multi-faceted relations with India. Diplomatic ties were established in 1949, and India opened its first Embassy of India in Helsinki, in 1968, in Helsinki. Both distinguished partners share converging interests and mutual benefits which have formed the foundation of their bilateral relations. Finland holds strategic importance for India in the areas of technology innovation and sustainable future. At the "India AI Impact Summit" held in February 2026, the session "Building Sovereign Deep Tech for a Resilient Future", underscored the relevance of open, secure and trusted technological partnerships for a sustainable and resilient technological future. The session highlighted India's collaboration with Finland across key technological domains, including artificial intelligence, space, quantum computing and next-generation digital networks, to promote "resilience, sustainability and human-centric technological progress" (PIB, 2026). In March 2026, both sides upgraded their relations, bringing strategic partnership in digitalisation and sustainability (MEA, 2026a). The establishment of a cross-sectoral Joint Working Group on Digitalisation, with cooperation advancing AI, 6G, and quantum communications, widened the scope of their relations by providing a more structured framework for digital transition. Similarly, the deepening of cooperation on sustainability has enabled both India and Finland to advance ties for clean energy solutions, including, renewable energy, circular economy, space, innovation, education and people-to-people connectivity. Thus, at the May 2026 Summit meeting of the PM of India with the PM of Finland, Mr. Petteri Orpo, both leaders emphasised the strategic relevance of "sustainability and digitalisation for driving future economic growth and development"(MEA, 2026b). Both sides also acknowledged the significant contribution of Indian professionals to Finland's technology and innovation ecosystem.

Iceland: An important economic partner for India, Iceland shared relations based on democratic values and bilateral interests. Diplomatic relations between India and Iceland were established in 1972, and since then, bilateral ties in economic cooperation have been enhanced through trade and investment, the reduction of trade barriers and the promotion of free and open trade among EFTA countries. The India- EFTA Trade Economic Partnership Agreement is not merely a trade deal; it offers much more towards investment flow, research collaboration

and job creation. Moreover, it also produced opportunities in the sector of renewable energy, sustainable fisheries management, green innovation, climate technologies and geothermal energy, which reflects a profound “economic integration”. Iceland has consistently supported India’s aspiration for a permanent seat in the UNSC. It has also acquired growing strategic relevance for India by contributing to the modernisation of technological capabilities and by promoting a resilient economy through the use of clean energy. Cooperation between Icelandic and Indian firms in carbon capture, e-methanol and green hydrogen has the potential to create scope for a future economy based on sustainable resources. Conversely, as a major rising power in Asia, India holds increasing geostrategic relevance for Iceland, particularly in the area of Arctic cooperation, climate science, and maritime governance, where both partners share mutual interests and support a rules-based international order. As an observer in the Arctic Council, India has a strong interest in the developments in the Arctic, including the emergence of new shipping routes resulting from climate change, which could enhance connectivity between the North Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific (Verma, 2026). At the May Summit 2026, during his meeting with PM Ms Kristrún Mjöll Frostadóttir, the PM of India expressed a desire to strengthen cultural and tourism exchange and enhance cooperation in Arctic research.

Norway: An Economic and Green Strategic Partner, Norway is pivotal for overall collaboration across several core pillars, including maritime cooperation, blue economy, renewable energy, Arctic and Polar research, space cooperation and institutional connections for higher education and research. Norway was among the first countries to recognise India’s sovereignty and established bilateral political relations in February 1947, months before India’s formal independence in August 1947. These early diplomatic connections reflected Norway’s prompt recognition of India’s emerging sovereignty and laid the foundation for the post-independence bilateral relationship. India opened its Embassy in 1957 in Oslo, further strengthening formal diplomatic ties based on shared democratic values, the rule of law and a commitment to multilateralism. Both nations’ dynamic approach to their bilateral relations, extending beyond traditional engagements, reflects a smart power strategy based on economic cooperation and sustainable development, leading to potential growth and clean energy collaboration (CII, 2025). Both nations have a strong shipping partnership, with Indian seafarers serving on Norwegian vessels, and Norwegian shipowners maintaining a significant presence in Indian cities, mostly through Cochin Shipyard. In 2019, they bilaterally established a Joint Task Force on Blue Economy to work on key projects including marine spatial planning, ocean research, tsunami warning systems, and deep-sea mineral exploration and test mining.

Their energy transition focuses on green shipping, hydrogen and carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology, and therefore, the Norwegian Climate Investment Fund has invested in India. India's first-ever scientific research station in the Arctic, "Himadri", has marked its growing presence in Svalbard. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has collaborated with Norway's Svalbard ground station and KSAT for satellite data reception and mission support. Furthermore, both countries support the bilateral scientific and academic strategy "Panorama" to expand cooperation in higher education and research (MEA, 2026c). During the May Summit, the bilateral discussion between the PM of India and the PM of Norway, Mr. Jonas Gahr Støre, underscored the need for enhanced business cooperation, bilateral trade and investment. Accordingly, both leaders encouraged business representatives to develop new and more dynamic tie-ups to achieve the shared objectives set under the TEPA. The formulation of a Joint Action Plan (JAP) for future cooperation within the green strategic partnership aims to further elevate their ties via balancing energy security, strengthening the economy and encouraging investment (MEA, 2026d).

Sweden: A gateway country to India-Nordic engagement, Sweden is a strategic partner for India, sharing a longstanding close relation, established in 1948. Both countries share common concerns and follow similar approaches to address global issues, while maintaining peace, security and development. India is Sweden's third-largest trading partner in Asia, after China and Japan, which has enabled Swedish companies to establish a strong presence in India, and become major firms among the leading contributors to the Make in India initiative. Simultaneously, the growing presence of Indian businesses in Sweden, especially in the Information Technology sector, has strengthened business linkages and investment flows in each other's financial, healthcare and digital markets. The celebration of "India-Sweden Innovation Day" underpinned the importance of clean energy, AI and the circular economy. They both have signed a range of MoUs and agreements to work bilaterally in science and technology, healthcare, sustainable urban development, renewable energy, railways, space, polar science, and defence. Several Joint Working Groups have also been formed to implement cooperation across these sectors. Multilateral engagement at various international platforms has encouraged these two distinct partners to elevate the longstanding relations into a strategic partnership. Therefore, during the Summit visit, the bilateral discussion with PM Narendra Modi and PM Mr Ulf Kristersson, further elevated India-Sweden relations to a strategic partnership, expanding cooperation on four key pillars: Strategic Dialogue for Stability and Security; Next-Generation Economic Partnership; Emerging Technologies and Trusted

Connectivity; and Shaping Tomorrow Together- People, Planet and Resilience. A JAP for 2026-2030 endorsed a “comprehensive roadmap for cooperation, across political, economic, technological, security, climate and people-to-people domains” (PMO, 2026). Thus, a strategic partnership defines the strengthening of bilateral exchange of dialogue among security advisors, doubling the economic exchange and investment that meets with India’s vision of 2047. Leaders from both countries emphasised cooperation in emerging technology, digitalisation and trusted connectivity, and this can strengthen collaboration through the Sweden–India Technology and Artificial Intelligence Corridor (SITAC). They also welcomed joint collaboration between the space agency Swedish Space Corporation (SSC) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on the Venus orbiter mission. Both sides have deepened cooperation in advanced mining, mineral processing, refining, and downstream capabilities to strengthen critical mineral supply chains. They also emphasised the importance of people-to-people connectivity and mobility for study (Research) and Work (high-skilled labour) in Sweden (MEA, 2026e). Their bilateral relations further intensify their cooperation on innovation, space, technologies, green transitions, investments, and research and development. At the same time, both sides’ leaders aim to strengthen their political, diplomatic and defence relations by addressing issues such as economic security, supply chains, cyber security and counterterrorism (Government of Sweden, 2026).

Thus, India’s bilateral engagement with these five Nordic nations has evolved into a comprehensive and multidimensional strategic partnership, extending into emerging domains green technology, digital innovation, maritime security and people-to-people connectivity-reflecting India’s wider European outreach and its vision for an inclusive, resilient and sustainable future.

India–Nordic Cooperation: A Multilateral Platform

Four years after the first India-Nordic Summit, the global geopolitical landscape presented a notably different outlook. Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine and the resurgence of instability in Eastern Europe have transformed Europe’s security landscape. In this changing security landscape, India’s closer engagement with Northern Europe represents a strategic balancing act to diversify its partnership while maintaining its strategic autonomy. It also added a security dimension to the evolving partnership with a middle power, as the Nordic Prime Ministers condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and called for an immediate ceasefire, while India Prime Ministers reaffirmed strong commitment to multilateralism and

international cooperation for maintaining regional stability and global peace (ANI, 2022). In this scenario, the Second India-Nordic Summit held in May 2022 in Copenhagen, Denmark, remained diplomatic in cooperation, mainly structured around key concerns such as economic recovery, green transition and climate change, the blue economy, innovation and digitalisation. Though this Summit continued with reaffirmed cooperation and reiterated previously established commitments. Furthermore, both sides' leaders mutually supported institutional reforms in the UN and WTO to make it more transparent, accountable and effective, with a strong voice for India's permanent seat in the expanded UN Security Council.

The geopolitical turmoil in Europe triggered by Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine, policy uncertainties under the Trump administration in its actions, particularly related to higher trade tariffs and efforts to acquire Greenland, and the recent Israel-Iran conflict have significantly altered the strategic environment. In the backdrop of this, India-Nordic relations have undergone a strategic pivot, evolving beyond traditional economic cooperation into a strategic partnership centred around economic and technological resilience. It promotes green and digital transitions, strengthens resilient supply chains, and advances technology, innovation and sustainable development. Thus, the India-Nordic partnership offers an alternative model of cooperation that supports a free, open, stable and rules-based international order.

Meanwhile, the Third India-Nordic Summit, which held in Oslo on 19 May 2026, Norway, depicts a geostrategic connotation in their relations and mutual concerns for global challenges. The visit of India's PM to Norway over the past four decades highlights a shift in India's foreign policy approach to Europe. India increasingly multi-dimensional approach to diplomacy, based on soft power tool to diversify its strategic partnerships, strengthening cooperation beyond traditional alliances in the areas of "trade and investment, blue economy, maritime security, digital innovation, and emerging technologies, with Nordic countries progressing collaboration in STEM research, resilient supply chains and defence partnership (MEA, 2026f). The multilateral summit between India and Nordic leaders has been more aspirational than operational, and their bilateral ties to the "Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership" present a diplomatic significance towards their commitments. It is based on a converging interests approach to navigate the supply chain disruptions, and India's vast market, growing technological capacity and its non-aligned posture, offer a perfect partner for alignment on common issues.

Major outcomes of the Summit:

- **Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership:** It promotes sustainable technologies, resource management and innovation to enhance cooperation in the area of blue economy, circular economy and digital infrastructure. The strengthening of digital infrastructure leads to strengthened governance, affirmative results in climate action, creates green jobs, enhances trades and investment, improves water sustainability and fosters collaborative research and education for long-term sustainable development.
- **Trade and Economy:** After successful negotiations of the FTA with the EU, India targets the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. The EFTA is a regional economic bloc among these four nations. If it gets signed, Indian exporters will have access to “specialised inputs and create a conducive trade and investment environment”. This is offering economic resilience, targeting \$100 billion in investment for opening new markets and 1 million jobs creation in India. They also pushed for stronger India-Indo-Pacific-Nordic connectivity through the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.
- **Initiatives in Climate Action:** India-Nordic initiatives on climate change mitigation promote an innovative and sustainable approach to address climate challenges. The leaders highlighted the importance of eco-friendly lifestyles, water resilience and the circular economy, including through India-led Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment). They emphasised behavioural change along with the adoption of renewable energy and low-emission technologies such as carbon capture, utilisation and storage, green hydrogen and critical minerals for combating climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss while advancing sustainable development, building a green economy and ensuring long-term economic growth.
- **Cooperation in Arctic and Polar Research:** The summit underpinned joint research initiatives to deepen cooperation in the Arctic, including collaboration in polar research, climate system and environment protection. The shared commitment and Nordic leaders’ impetus to strengthen dialogue and cooperation in the Arctic through an established multilateral framework to ensure a stable Arctic, which is strategically crucial for India’s monsoon patterns, environmental balance, sustainability, and to

boost agricultural productivity. The Prime Ministers of Nordic countries acknowledged India's role as an observer to the Arctic Council and appreciated its growing contribution in the council's working groups and expert bodies.

- ***Blue Economy and Maritime Cooperation:*** India and Nordic countries agreed to strengthen a sustainable blue economy, which promotes economic growth, employment, food security and healthy oceans. Their commitment to decarbonise the shipping sector, facilitating technology transfers, enhancing collaboration between the maritime and shipbuilding industries and promoting sustainable ship recycling activities under the Hong Kong Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships. To strengthen cooperation in maritime security, leaders from India and Nordic nations promote a free, open, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Their reinforcing commitment towards expanding collaboration through bilateral as well as joint activities in the Indo-Pacific Ocean initiatives and the Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions (MAHASAGAR) vision to counter piracy, illegal fishing, maritime pollution, safety and security of seafarers through enhanced information sharing and inter-agency coordination.
- ***Defence Industrial Collaboration:*** The summit emphasised defence industrial collaboration between India and the Nordic nations. Developing such cooperation through 100 per cent Foreign Direct Investment in India's defence sector can facilitate technology transfer, joint research and innovation, strengthen domestic defence manufacturing, generate skilled employment, enhance defence exports, and improve production efficiency, thereby directly contributing to India's defence preparedness and self-reliance.
- ***Mobility of Talent:*** India-Nordic countries PMs expressed growing people-to-people connections through culture, tourism and mobility. The leaders supported linkages between students, academics, researchers and professionals that can enhance global exposures, improve research quantity and quality and strengthen skills to promote innovation, entrepreneurship, start-ups, and overall economic growth.

Thus, India-Nordic relations at multilateral forums are shaped by an issue-based and future-oriented framework. The engagement with these five nations differs from India's relations with major European powers such as France and Germany, which possess hard-core security

dimensions including major-power diplomacy and defence cooperation. In contrast, India's relations with these Nordic countries demonstrate collective cooperation centred around green transition, digital innovation, and sustainable development. Therefore, the partnership with these five nations is more collaborative and thematic rather than deeply security centric.

Conclusion

In the current geopolitical complex world structure, a significant shift in India's foreign affairs towards European engagement, marks a strategic recalibration of its diplomatic architecture, driven by its pragmatic approach. Moving beyond the peripheral focus of major European powers to diplomatic neglected region, India's strategic realignment towards Nordic nations reflects deliberate efforts to diversify its ties with Europe beyond traditional partners.

As the most populous country and one of the fastest-growing economies, India's collaboration with five technologically advanced and values-aligned democracies, reflects its evolving relations with these Nordic nations, driven by converging interests in technology, sustainability and a stable multipolar world ground on rules-based international order. In the increasingly great-power politics, India's multi-alignment approach in establishing strategic partnerships with these middle powers in green technology and the economic domain demonstrates its smart power strategy, based on soft power tools such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, Arctic governance, blue economy, and clean energy infrastructure, creating a geopolitical balancing while maintaining its strategic autonomy as a key pillar of its foreign policy.

India's engagement with the Nordic nations bilaterally at multilateral forum adds multi-dimensionality to cooperation: with Denmark, it advances green transitions initiatives; with Finland, it deepens cooperation in AI, 6G, and quantum communication; with Sweden, it builds a technology corridor and deepening defence-industrial ties; with Norway, it anchors maritime cooperation, blue economy and Arctic research; and with Iceland, it focused on geothermal energy, carbon capture, and Arctic scientific collaboration. Collectively, partnerships with these five Nordic countries reinforce one another and deepen India's structural presence in the region.

This represents a strategic opportunity for India to deepen its engagement with these advanced democracies. India's growing international influence should therefore be reflected in a coherent and structured foreign policy architecture based on clear priorities. A continuous and comprehensive connect with the Nordic region is a strategic imperative, essential to

unlocking India's full potential as a regional leader and credible global actor. As India advances towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, the India-Nordic partnership offers a strategic bridge linking innovation, sustainability and shared democratic values towards a resilient future.

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About the Author

Khushboo Sen Dhuruv, is a Research Assistant at CLAWS, with a Ph.D. from JNU, specialising in European security, Russia, transatlantic relations, and India–EU strategic affairs.



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