

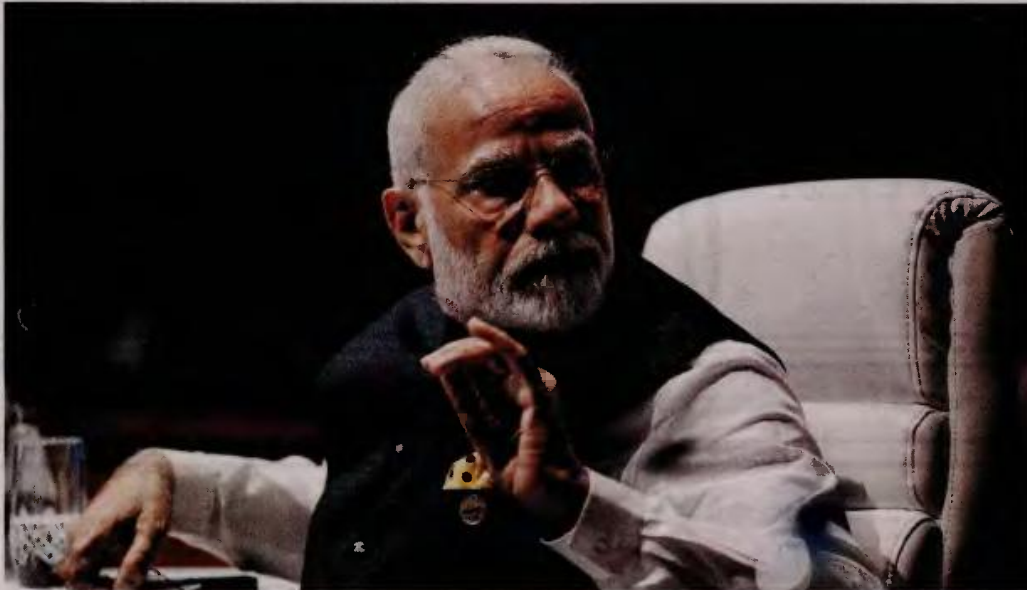
## 1. INDIAN PM MODI IN GREECE A HISTORIC VISIT

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**Prime Minister** of India Narendra Modi gestures at the plenary session of the 2023 BRICS Summit at the Sandton Convention Center in Johannesburg, South Africa, on Wednesday.

## Indian PM Modi in Greece: A historic visit

COMMENTARY | BY GEORGE TZOGOPOULOS \*

Greece and India are systematically working to strengthen bilateral ties. The visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Athens on August 25 will be the culmination of diplomatic efforts of the last years. It was only 40 years ago when Indira Gandhi flew to Greece on the invitation of her counterpart, Andreas Papandreou. In the interim, three Indian presidents – Zail Singh in 1986, APJ Abdul Kalam in 2007 and Ram Nath Kovind in 2018 – paid state visits.

Greece-Indian relations are marked by mutual respect and a common understanding of world challenges. While history plays an important role, current affairs are of high significance. The Mediterranean Basin certainly differs from the Indo-Pacific Region but Athens and New Delhi agree on the norms that could safeguard stability and peace. They both believe in the importance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Additionally, the growing Indian presence in the Mediterranean does not pass unnoticed in Greece. Premier Modi visited France last month and agreed on stronger defense ties with President Emmanuel Macron. He also flew to Egypt in June for talks with President Abdel Fattah El-Sissi, and received his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni last March in the Indian capital. Modi also enjoys a cordial personal rela-

tionship with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The two leaders regularly hold telephone conversations.

As Greece and India are in the process of elevating their partnership, they are also expanding their defense collaboration. Although the relevant bilateral memorandum of understanding was signed in 1998,

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there has been much action lately. The Indian Air Force, for example, participated in multinational Exercise Iniochos 2023. Further to this, a few weeks ago, the Indian Navy's Chennai engaged in passage exercises in Crete along with Greece's Nikiforos Fokas.

From the prism of Greece, economic synergies with India matter. Indian infrastructure company GMR Airports entered the Greek market recently and will construct the Kasteli airport in Crete in a joint venture with Greek firm GEK-Terna. More deals will perhaps follow as Greece is carrying out privatizations in dif-

ferent sectors.

Bilateral trade is also increasing. According to Indian statistics, which calculate the fiscal year from April 1 until March 31, Indian exports to Greece rose from \$300 million in 2012-2013 to \$785 million in 2022-2023, while imports from Greece amounted from \$111 million to \$1.1 billion in the same timeframe. India mainly imports cotton, scrap, marble, granite and aluminium foils from Greece, and exports petroleum products, automobile components, sesame and frozen prawns, shrimps and squid.

Good Greek-Indian relations are placed in the European context. Greece, which benefits by the investment of China's Cosco shipping company in the port of Piraeus, eyes a bigger role as a gateway of Indian products to Europe. Eurostat data demonstrate that EU imports from India increased from €39.6 billion in 2019, the year before the outbreak of the pandemic, to €67.6 billion in 2022. As EU-Indian relations are being cemented under the current geopolitical circumstances, Greece can grasp the trade opportunity.

\* Dr George N. Tzogopoulos is senior fellow at the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) and at the Begin Sadat Center, and a lecturer at the European Institute of Nice, France.