

DOI: 10.31648/pw.6469

MICHAŁ DAHL

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2803-2648>

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń

Beijing Sport University (Beijing, PRC)

## INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN 2014-2019

KEYWORDS: India, Central and Eastern Europe, CEE, foreign policy, diplomacy, economic ties

ABSTRACT: It has been said that Central and Eastern Europe can be seen as an interesting direction for Indian political and economic expansion. Both the data on diplomatic activity and India's trade with the countries of CEE, however, prove that the region is not of key importance for New Delhi's foreign policy. On the other hand, a steadily growing trade turnover allows assuming that the current situation will gradually change. The conclusions may be confirmed by the analysis of New Delhi's diplomacy directions in the region. The Indian leaders (not the most important figures, taking into account symbolism and real significance) visited in the years 2014-2019 the CEE countries with the highest trade turnover with India, namely Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania. They also paid visits to Bulgaria, Croatia, and Serbia, that is countries with which India's trade turnover is relatively low, but steadily growing. It may indicate a desire to establish more active diplomatic and economic involvement in this region than previously.

### 1. Introduction

Dynamic changes in the international environment of the 21st century pose a challenge for scientists and analysts dealing with international relations, opening up completely new research areas. Not only does the willingness to understand and possibly precisely describe and interpret phenomena in the international arena require considering new actors, with relatively little activity in the post-Cold War order, but also superpowers' areas of expansion. Among them, China, India and Brazil can be mentioned, as their superpower ambitions go far beyond the territories they occupy. Rarely does the rivalry between leading actors take the form of direct armed conflicts<sup>1</sup>, affecting rather the economic sphere, largely determining and legitimizing the superpower status of a given state.

---

<sup>1</sup> More common form of conflict is a proxy war, such as the one associated with the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran for domination in the Middle East.

Competition for new markets is associated primarily with projects pushed through the government of the People's Republic of China and its symbols have become, among others, major infrastructure projects, such as the Belt and Route Initiative (BRI; both overland and sea routes), or Chinese investments in Africa and Central Asia. Looking at Chinese activity in the aforementioned geopolitical regions as well as in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the Mediterranean basin or Southeast Asia, analysts often forget that China is not the only power interested in strengthening economic relations with geopolitical areas remote from their territories<sup>2</sup>. A similar strategy – although on an incomparably smaller scale – has been carried out for years by, for instance, Japan and Russia. It has also been implemented by India, which – considering the fact that according to some indicators, India is currently the third (after Chinese and American) economy in the world<sup>3</sup> – is interesting and necessary to analyze the research problem.

The authors of the report prepared by the American Brookings Institute pointed out that Central and Eastern Europe can be seen as an interesting direction for Indian foreign policy. They indicated that even though “[t]he region accounts for only 1.2% of India's exports [...] the CEE countries appear keen to bolster business ties with India in agriculture, energy, transportation, cybersecurity, and information technology” (Jaishankar 2018). On the other hand, the same author's article published only half a year later on “The Diplomat” portal seems to openly question the role of the region as one of New Delhi's foreign policy priorities, stating that “these nations apparently did not rise in the importance rankings of Indian foreign policy” (Iwanek 2019). The authors of both analyzes, which are one of few sources of information on India's foreign policy towards Central and Eastern Europe, describe the region as a whole, almost not distinguishing individual countries in the context of relations with India. The only exception here is a direct reference to Bulgaria and the Czech Republic as the goals of President Ram Nath Kovind's foreign travel in September 2018 (Jaishankar 2018). Neither of the articles, although important for understanding the specificity of India's relations with the CEE region, provides the reader with detailed knowledge and statistical data illustrating the real diplomatic and economic commitment of New Delhi in the analyzed geopolitical area.

---

<sup>2</sup> There are quite a lot of exceptions from that trend, however, starting with publications referring to India as a rising power and pointing to the implications of its rise (Iwanek/Burakowski 2013; Metcalf/Metcalf 2012; Nowik 2016; Osiewicz 2009; Rothermund 2010).

<sup>3</sup> One of the most commonly cited indicator proving that statement is the gross domestic product based on purchasing power parity (GDP PPP; The World Bank 2019).

## 2. Objectives and area of research, methodology

The purpose of this article is to obtain an answer to the research problem that can be presented in the form of the following question: Which of the Central and Eastern European countries was the most important in the Indian strategy towards the region in 2014-2019? The detailed problems constructed on the basis of the main research problem concern the analyzed period and can be presented as follows: Which of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was the most important for Indian diplomacy?; Which of the Central and Eastern European countries played the role of the most important trading partner for India?

The structure of the article is aimed at providing the fullest possible response to research problems and its parts are devoted to Indian diplomacy towards the CEE region (the analysis of visits of foreign policy entities as well as bilateral and multilateral agreements) and India's trade relations with countries of Central and Eastern Europe, respectively. The research demonstrated in the article is quantitative, which results from the willingness to prepare an analysis based on objective statistical data and avoid discretionary and difficult to measure issues present in many contemporary analyzes and reports.

Being aware of the fact that India's foreign policy is an extremely complex issue, the author's ambition is not to thoroughly analyze and describe in detail all aspects related to it, but only to list and characterize several factors that allow answering the research problems being investigated.

The temporal criteria set for the article cover the time from May 26, 2014, to May 30, 2019 – the first term of Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister of India<sup>4</sup>.

The spatial criteria include countries that are a part of a geopolitical region called "Central and Eastern Europe". Due to difficulties in establishing the boundaries of the region (Foreword 2000, v), the author of the paper has decided to use the most common geographic framework of this area, which can be described as "the belt from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, whose western borders are marked by Germany and Austria; the eastern one – Russia"<sup>5</sup> (Getka 2015, 9). One of the controversial issues is the inclusion of Kosovo (its declaration of independence of 2008 is not recognized by 82 out of 193 members of the United Nations; Gilbert 2018) in the group of actors being discussed. Given the fact that India officially has not recognized Kosovo as an independent country and in the statistics, it constitutes a part of Serbia, the author has decided to base the analysis on the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia (in Indian governmental statistics as "Macedonia"), Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

<sup>4</sup> More about Prime Minister Modi and his foreign policy strategy (Domżański 2017, 283-288).

<sup>5</sup> Translated by the author from the Polish version: "pas od Morza Bałtyckiego do Morza Czarnego, którego zachodnie granice wyznaczają Niemcy i Austria; wschodnie zaś – Rosja" (Getka 2015, 9).

### 3. Central and Eastern Europe as a goal of visits of politicians conducting Indian foreign policy

The Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs play a key role in Indian foreign policy. Relevant powers in this area are also vested in the President (though mainly of a symbolic nature) and Ministers of Internal Affairs, Finance and Defence (Domzalski 2017, 38) as well as Vice President. In this subsection, the visits of the most important decision-makers in the field of Indian foreign policy in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the years 2014-2019 are listed and characterized. An attempt has also been made to identify the role of the region for New Delhi's diplomacy. The author has distinguished (according to the criterion of real significance for Indian diplomacy) the following entities: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister (EAM) Sushma Swaraj, Presidents Pranab Mukherjee and Ram Nath Kovind as well as Vice Presidents Mohammad Hamid Ansari and Venkaiah Naidu<sup>6</sup>.

The fact that during the first term as the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi never once visited any of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe seems to indicate that the region was not a priority for his cabinet. For comparison, 16 out of 83 Prime Minister's trips aimed at visiting European countries (four times he visited Germany, three times France, twice Great Britain and Switzerland, he also came to Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, and Sweden). Asian countries (primarily neighbouring countries) were a target of 36 trips. Narendra Modi also visited North America (7 trips, 5 of which were to the USA), the Middle East, Africa, South America, Russia and Australia (Ministry of External Affairs 2019c).

The second most important politician for Indian foreign policy is External Affairs Minister, the executor of the government's foreign policy. During her tenure, Minister Sushma Swaraj visited Asia the most times (42 visits, 30 of which were to the neighbours of India), 14 times she came to the Middle East, 5 times to the USA, Africa and Russia, and 9 times to Europe. It is worth noting that apart from countries, such as Great Britain, Malta, Germany, Italy (2 visits), France, Luxembourg, and Belgium, the Minister visited one of the CEE countries – Bulgaria (Ministry of External Affairs, 2019d). The trip of Sushma Swaraj to Bulgaria was a part of the trip arranged by the EAM on February 16–19, 2019. The Minister first went to Bulgaria (February 16–17) to visit Morocco (February 17–18) and Spain (February 18–19). According to the official press release published before the visit,

---

<sup>6</sup> The tenure of a particular President and Vice President of India does not always coincide with the tenure of a particular Prime Minister. In the designated work caesuras (2014-2019) are the terms of the two presidents: Pranab Mukherjee (July 25, 2012 – July 25, 2017; Former President 2019) and Ram Nath Kovind (assumed office on July 25, 2017; The President of India 2019), as well as two Vice Presidents: Mohammad Hamid Ansari (August 11, 2007 – August 10, 2017; Former Vice President 2019) and Venkaiah Naidu (assumed office on August 11, 2017; Former Vice President 2019).

[t]he visit is a follow-up visit to the State visit of the President of India to Bulgaria in September last year. This is the first-ever visit of an Indian External Affairs Minister to Bulgaria. During the visit, EAM will meet with the Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria. The two leaders will discuss bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest. EAM will pay floral tributes at the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the South Park in Sofia. The statue was unveiled last year by Hon'ble President of India along with the President of Bulgaria to mark the celebrations of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. She will also interact with the Indian community and Friends of India in Sofia during the visit (Press release 2019a).

Another actor important for New Delhi's foreign policy, although mainly for symbolic reasons, is the President, whose activity in international diplomacy is half lower than that of the Prime Minister, or External Affairs Minister. From May 26, 2014, to May 30, 2019, the Presidents of India took a total of 30 foreign trips, visiting African (10), European (9), Asian (7), South American (4) countries as well as the Middle East, Australia and Oceania (3 times each), and Russia (once). Targets of the presidential diplomacy differed significantly from the priorities of governmental diplomacy, which can best be seen on the example of Europe. Indeed, the Indian Presidents directed their steps to Norway, Finland, Sweden, Belgium, Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Croatia (Ministry of External Affairs 2019a). For the analysis carried out in this article, in the context of presidential overseas visits, the trip of President Ram Nath Kovind to Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Croatia is of key importance. The first two countries were visited by the President during the state visit held on September 2–9, 2018, when he also visited Cyprus. Croatia was on the tour of the President from March 25 – April 2, 2019, together with Bolivia and Chile (Ministry of External Affairs 2019a).

As emphasized in the press release of September 1, 2018, the visit of President Ram Nath Kovind to Bulgaria took place at the invitation of President Rumen Radev. The document underlines the historical relationship between the two nations, reaching the 8th century A.D., and indicates the presence of Indian companies in Bulgaria and vice-versa, reflected in the annual trade at USD 315 million. The program of the President's visit to Sofia, included not only the talks between the leaders and attendance at the official banquet issued in honour of the head of state by Prime Minister Boyko Borissov, but also the participation of the guest, along with representatives of the Indian business, in the Business Forum. The President also gave a lecture at the University of Sofia and met with representatives of the diaspora (Press release 2018a).

The agenda of President Ram Nath Kovind's visit to the Czech Republic did not differ significantly from the presidential agenda implemented in Bulgaria. The President met with representatives of the Czech authorities and participated in the Business Forum. At that time, he visited the ELI Beamlines – the International Laser Research Institute, met with the students of Indology at Charles University in Prague

as well as the representatives of the Indian diaspora. The visit commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Czech Republic was aimed at highlighting strong relationships between the states and the promotion of Indian business. One of the flagship projects that was launched was the “Make in India” program (Press release 2018a).

The destination of the last presidential visit in Central and Eastern Europe was the youngest member state of the European Union, namely Croatia. The press release of March 22, 2019, pointed to strong cultural links between India and Croatia expressed in “[t]he Indology Department at the University of Zagreb has a long history of over six decades, and an ICCR Hindi Chair was set up a decade ago” (Press release 2019b). Initial identification of the directions of potential involvement of India in the Croatian business was also made, indicating that

[t]he two countries are now focusing on strengthening trade and investment linkages. There are already investments by some Indian companies in the areas of pharmaceuticals, information technology and renewable energy. There is good scope to enhance trade in textiles, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, leather goods, engineering goods, and food processing sectors (Press release 2019b).

The last of the actors mentioned in this part of the paper is the Vice President, who is formally a high-ranked state official (Banerjee-Dube 2015, 445). In the analyzed period, Vice Presidents of India took 28 foreign trips, visiting Asian (11), African (10), European (7), South and North American (7) countries. Most of the politicians’ travels to Europe focused on visiting CEE countries (Hungary, Poland, Serbia, Romania), while the remaining trips were organized to Belgium, France and Malta (Ministry of External Affairs 2019b). Individual countries of Central and Eastern Europe were visited by Vice President Mohammad Hamid Ansari, that is Hungary (October 15–17, 2016) and Poland (April 26–28, 2017) as well as Venkaiah Naidu, namely Serbia (September 14–16, 2018) and Romania (September 18–20, 2018; Ministry of External Affairs 2019b).

In addition to the participation in meetings with the hosts, which is typical of such visits, Vice Presidents’ visits in Central and Eastern Europe abounded in several symbolic elements, including:

- delivering a lecture on “Indian Democracy: Achievements and Challenges” (Hungary; Speech 2016),
- attending the Business Seminar at Ministry of Economic Development (Speech 2017), delivering a public lecture on “Seven Decades of Indian Democracy”, the opening of the new Indian embassy in Warsaw (Poland; Embassy of India 2019),
- addressing the Special Session of the National Assembly, attending the Business Forum (Serbia; Press release 2018b),
- attending the Business Forum, meeting with the representatives of the Indian community (Romania; Press release 2018b).

Each time, the role of individual countries in strengthening the Indian economy was emphasized, indicating increasing trade turnover, which is described in detail in the third empirical part of the article.

#### 4. CEE countries in bilateral and multilateral agreements with India

During the visits of entities conducting Indian foreign policy in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, that is Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Serbia, some bilateral and multilateral documents were signed. The list of documents signed in the years 2014-2019 is collated in Table 1.

Table 1. Documents signed during the visits of Indian Presidents and Vice Presidents to CEE countries between 2014-2019

Country	Documents signed
1	2
Bulgaria (State Visit of the President to Bulgaria; September 4–6, 2018)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A Programme of Cooperation between India and Bulgaria in the field of Science &amp; Technology for the period 2018-2021</li> <li>2. Memorandum of Understanding between India and Bulgaria on Cooperation in Tourism</li> <li>3. Memorandum of Understanding between Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Sofia University on the establishment of ICCR Chair for the Hindi Language</li> <li>4. Memorandum of Understanding between Invest India and Invest Bulgaria</li> </ol>
Croatia (State Visit of the President to Croatia; March 25–28, 2019)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of India on Tourism Cooperation</li> <li>2. Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and the University of Zagreb on Establishing the Department of Sanskrit</li> <li>3. Extension of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and the University of Zagreb on Establishing the Department of Hindu Studies</li> <li>3. Memorandum of Understanding between the Faculty of Kinesiology of the University of Zagreb and the Sports Authority of India</li> </ol>
Czech Republic (State Visit of the President to the Czech Republic; September 6–9, 2018)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Memorandum of Understanding on Scientific and Technological Cooperation between the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research of the Republic of India</li> <li>2. The Work Plan for Support of Czech-Indian Projects for the Years 2019-2022 between the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic and Department of Science and Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of India</li> <li>3. The Agreement between the Government of the Czech Republic and the Government of the Republic of India on Exemption from Visa Requirements for Holders of Diplomatic Passports</li> </ol>



cont. Table 1

1	2
Hungary (Visit of Vice President to Hungary; October 15–17, 2016)	1. Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the Field of Water Management between Ministry of Interior of Hungary and Ministry of Water Resources, RD & GR of India 2. Memorandum of Understanding between Indian Council of World Affairs, India and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary
Poland (Visit of Vice President to Poland; April 26–28, 2017)	1. The Agreement between the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Republic of Poland and the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare of the Republic of India on Co-Operation in the Field of Agriculture
Romania (Visit of the Vice President to Romania; September 18–20, 2018)	1. Memorandum of Understanding in the field of Tourism Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of Romania 2. The Memorandum of Understanding between Petroleum-Gas University, Ploiesti and PanditDeenDayal Petroleum University, Gandhinagar 3. Three Memoranda of Understanding of Bucharest Chamber of Commerce each with CII, ASSOCHAM and PHDCCI
Serbia (Visit of Vice President to Serbia; September 15, 2018)	1. Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of the Republic of India on co-operation in plant health and plant quarantine 2. Air Services Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of the Republic of India

Source: own work based on the data retrieved from the official website of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (Ministry of External Affairs 2019e)

On the basis of the data contained in Table 1, it is transparent that the vast majority of the documents take the form of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). MOU can be described as “a document which sets out an understanding reached between two states as to their international commitments regarding some matter, but which does so in a way which indicates that the understanding is not legally binding” (Berridge/James 2003, 171-172). This means that the Memorandum of Understanding is not a treaty, although some treaties may adopt such a name. Most of the documents signed by Indian presidents and vice presidents during the visits to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe do not take a form of a treaty, but rather have a symbolic meaning, which does not make them worthless whatsoever.



## 5. India's trade with CEE countries<sup>7</sup>

The analysis carried out in this part of the paper aims at providing an answer to the question, which countries of Central and Eastern Europe played the role of the most important trading partner for India in the period of 2014-2019. Moreover, the objective of the study is to identify these countries whose trade with India was outstanding in comparison with others (both in terms of import and export) in 2014 and then in 2019. Not only will this allow identifying the most important partners for India, but also analysing changes in trade in the first term of Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister.

The data encompassed in Chart 1 clearly show that in 2014, Poland was the most important trade partner for India among the Central and Eastern European countries. India imported from Poland goods worth more than USD 600 million, while the value of export amounted to about USD 1 billion, which clearly exceeds the rates achieved by other states.

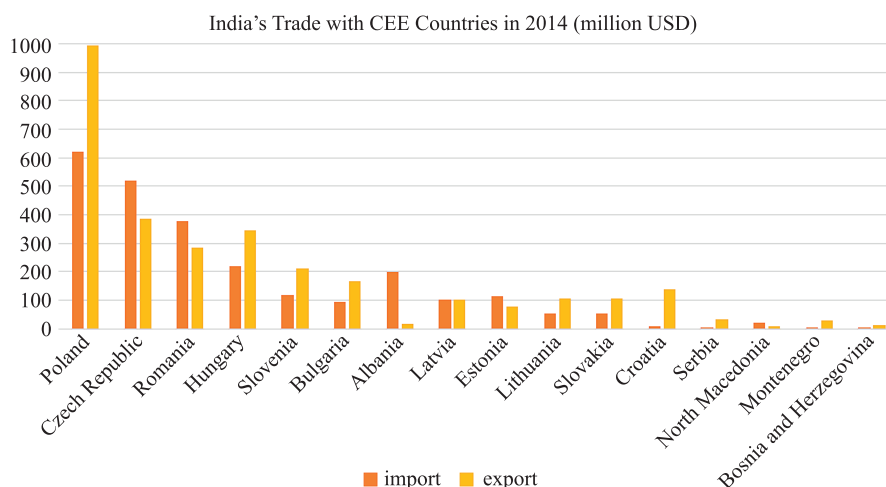


Chart 1. India's trade with the CEE countries in 2014

Source: own work based on the data retrieved from the official website of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India (Ministry of Commerce & Industry 2019)

The calculation of India's average trade turnover with countries of the CEE region in 2014 amounting to USD 345.86 million allows designating these countries that played the most important role in developing the Indian economy. In addition

<sup>7</sup> All statistical data quoted in this part of the paper come from the official website of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India (Ministry of Commerce & Industry 2019). The timeframe for the data of 2014 covers the period from April 2013 until March 2014, whereas for 2019, it covers the period from April 2018 until March 2019.

to the already distinguished Poland, those were the Czech Republic, Romania and Hungary (turnovers amounting to USD 905.05, 662.02 and 564,1 million respectively). Slightly below the average, the trade turnover with Slovenia was recorded – USD 330,38 million.

The second group deserving recognition consists of the countries whose trade turnover with India in 2014 was lower than the average for the region; however, they were still significant. The turnover of these countries is included within the range of 261.75 million USD to 148.86 million USD, and concerns respectively Bulgaria, Albania, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Croatia. The lowest turnover India achieved in trade with Serbia, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina – 34.79, 30.71, 30.58, and 13.23 million USD respectively.

By analyzing the data presented in the graph, it can be observed that India achieved a trade surplus in trade with the CEE countries. The value of export in 2014 amounted to USD 3.03 billion, while import to USD 2.51 billion. A negative balance occurred in India's trade relations with the Czech Republic, Romania, Albania, Latvia, Estonia, and Northern Macedonia, reaching the value of over USD 130 million in the case of the Czech Republic.

The total value of India's trade with the CEE countries amounted to USD 5.53 billion in the audited year. 29.2 percent of this value was constituted by trade with Poland (USD 1.62 billion), while 16.4, 12 and 10.2 percent by trade turnover with the Czech Republic, Romania and Hungary respectively. The total turnover in the Indian trade with Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, and Hungary reached 67.8 percent of the trade turnover with the whole CEE region.

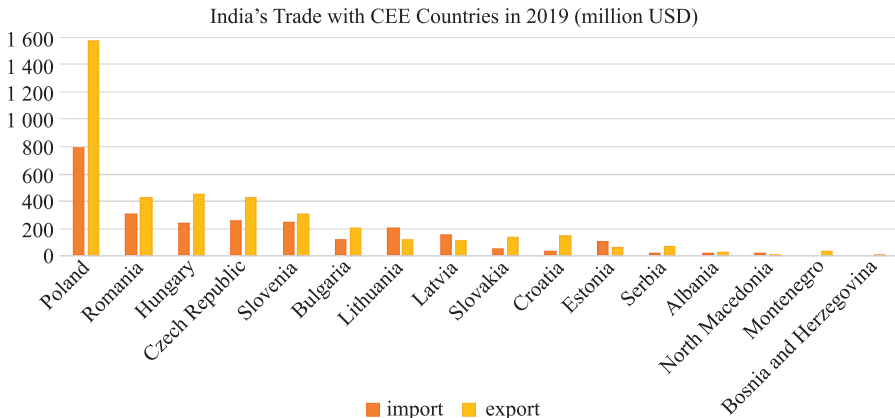


Chart 2. India's trade with the CEE countries in 2019

Source: own work based on the data retrieved from the official website of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India (Ministry of Commerce & Industry 2019)

In 2019, Poland was again the most important trading partner of India among the Central and Eastern European countries. The value of export exceeded USD 1.5 billion, while import accounted for about USD 800 million. In 2019 – just like five years ago – the Czech Republic, Romania and Hungary remain India's most prominent trading partners after Poland. By contrast, positions taken by these countries in the trade turnover chart changed – Romania took second place (USD 735.58 million), followed closely by Hungary and the Czech Republic (sales of USD 699.24 and 687.96 million respectively). Similarly to 2014, in 2019, Slovenia ranked in the fifth position and its trade with India (USD 566.03 million) clearly distances this state from the next group of entities present in the list.

The calculation of the average trade turnover of the surveyed group of countries with India amounting to USD 427.65 million in 2019 allows Poland, Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia to be classified as the CEE countries with the greatest importance for the Indian economy. The second group of countries may qualify entities whose turnover with India was encompassed within the range of USD 339.01 million to USD 172.5 million, referring respectively to Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Croatia, and Estonia. The lowest trade turnover India reached in relations with Serbia (USD 95.09 million), Albania (USD 57.7 million), North Macedonia (USD 43.62 million), Montenegro (USD 39.06 million), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (USD 19.53 million).

In 2019, the value of export of Indian goods to the Central and Eastern European countries amounted to USD 4.21 billion, whereas import to USD 2.63 billion. India reached again a large trade surplus (USD 1.58 billion). It is also worth noting that nearly 39 percent increase in the value of Indian export was accompanied by an increase in the value of import not exceeding 5 percent. A negative trade balance occurred in relations between India and Lithuania (over USD 80 million), Latvia, Estonia and North Macedonia.

The total trade turnover in India's relations with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe amounted to USD 6.84 billion in 2019 (an increase by 23.7 percent). 34.3 percent of this value was traded with Poland (USD 2.37 billion, increase by 46.3 percent), 10.9 percent with Romania (increase by 17.6 percent), 10.2 percent with Hungary (increase by 24 percent), and 10.1 percent with the Czech Republic (decline by 24 percent).

During the first term of Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister, growth in Indian trade was recorded in relations with Serbia (173.3 percent), Lithuania (113.7 percent), Slovenia (71.3 percent), Bosnia and Herzegovina (47, 6 percent), Poland (46.3 percent), North Macedonia (42 percent), Latvia (33 percent), Bulgaria and Croatia (29.5 percent each), Slovakia (29 percent), Montenegro (27.7 percent), Hungary (24 percent) and Romania (17.6 percent). The decline occurred in India's trade relations with Albania (72.6 percent), the Czech Republic (24 percent) and Estonia (11.3 percent).

The total turnover in the Indian trade with Poland, Romania, Hungary, and the Czech Republic equals 65.7 percent of the trade turnover with the whole CEE region. Including Slovenia, this value increases to 74 percent (73.7 percent in 2014).

At the end of this part of the paper, it is worth presenting data on India's trade with individual geopolitical regions to identify correctly the role of Central and Eastern Europe in the Indian economy. Data from the period between April 2018 and March 2019 show that India's trade turnover amounted to exactly 844.1 billion USD. USD 143.7 billion was traded with the EU Member States, USD 42.7 billion with Africa, USD 479.9 billion with Asia, and USD 103.8 billion with North America. This means that trade relations with the CEE countries constitute currently only 0.8 percent of whole India's trade turnover.

## 6. Conclusions and final remarks

The article aimed to obtain an answer to the following research problem: Which of the Central and Eastern European countries was the most important in the Indian strategy towards the region in the years 2014–2019? The first detailed research problem concerned the place occupied by the countries of the CEE region in Indian diplomacy in the examined period. The analysis of the data presented in the first empirical part, in particular, the lack of Prime Minister Modi's visits to the CEE states proves that the region was not included in the priorities of his government (Ministry of External Affairs 2019c)<sup>8</sup>. This conclusion seems to be confirmed by the fact that only 8 out of 210 foreign visits of entities responsible for conducting Indian diplomacy were to visit the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Bulgaria was distinguished twice (visit by EAM and the President), whereas the Czech Republic, Croatia (President's visit), Hungary, Poland, Serbia, and Romania once (Vice-President's visit; Ministry of External Affairs 2019a; 2019b; 2019d).

The visits of Indian presidents and vice presidents in the aforementioned CEE countries were accompanied by signing bilateral and multilateral documents, most of which took the form of Memorandum of Understanding. It is a common practice in inter-state relations and does not testify to the uniqueness of partner relations (Ministry of External Affairs 2019e).

The second detailed research problem concerning the place of Central and Eastern European countries in trade relations with India has been verified on the basis of the analysis of India's trade turnover with the ECC states. In the course

---

<sup>8</sup> In this context, it is natural to ask about the reasons for the formulation of Indian foreign policy priorities in the analyzed period in the way they are shaped and not any other. The answer requires outlining a wider geopolitical context, which cannot be presented in the paper due to its volume restrictions. However, it is worth noting some valuable works dealing with the abovementioned issues, incl. (Dahl 2015; Ganguly 2015; Jaishankar 2020; Hall 2019; Pande 2018; Pant 2019; Singh 2019).

of the research, it was shown that Poland is the most important regional trade partner for India (34.3 percent of trade with the ECC states). In the last five years, Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia could also be included in the group of India's largest CEE trading partners. After scrutinizing the cited statistical data, it is obvious that the region is currently of marginal importance for the Indian trade. 23.7 percent increase in India's trade with the ECC countries (significantly exceeding the 10.4 percent increase in the total Indian trade) and increase in India's trade with individual CEE countries (13 out of 16 countries, comparing data from 2019 and 2014) allows predicting that the role of the region for the Indian economy will be systematically growing (Ministry of Commerce & Industry 2019).

In conclusion, both the data on diplomatic activity and India's trade with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe prove that the region is not of key importance for the Indian foreign policy. In contrast, a steadily growing trade turnover allows assuming that the current situation will gradually change. The conclusions drawn above may be confirmed by the analysis of New Delhi's diplomacy directions in the region. The Indian leaders (not the most important ones, taking into account symbolism and real significance) visited in the years 2014-2019 the CEE countries with the highest trade turnover with India, namely Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania (Ministry of External Affairs 2019a; 2019b; 2019d). They also paid visits to Bulgaria, Croatia, and Serbia, that is countries with which India's trade turnover is relatively low but steadily growing. It may indicate a desire to establish more active diplomatic and economic involvement in this region than previously.

## References

### Official websites

- Embassy of India (2019), Embassy of India to Poland & Lithuania. Vice President of India Concludes Productive Visit to Poland [official website]. Retrieved from [https://www.indianembassywarsaw.gov.in/alert\\_detail.php?id=15](https://www.indianembassywarsaw.gov.in/alert_detail.php?id=15).
- Former President (2019), Former President of India. Shri Pranab Mukherjee [official website]. Retrieved from <http://pranabmukherjee.nic.in/index.html>.
- Former Vice President (2019), Former Vice President of India. Shri M. Hamid Ansari [official website]. Retrieved from <http://mhamidansari.nic.in/>.
- Ministry of Commerce & Industry (2019), Ministry of Commerce & Industry. System on Foreign Trade Performance Analysis (FTPA) Version 3.0 [official data website]. Retrieved from <https://commerce-app.gov.in/ftpa/default.asp>.
- Ministry of External Affairs (2019a), Ministry of External Affairs. President Visits [official data website]. Retrieved from <https://mea.gov.in/president-visits.htm>.
- Ministry of External Affairs (2019b), Ministry of External Affairs. Vice President Visits [official data website]. Retrieved from <https://mea.gov.in/vice-president-visits.htm>.
- Ministry of External Affairs (2019c), Ministry of External Affairs. Prime Minister Visits [official data website]. Retrieved from <https://mea.gov.in/prime-minister-visits.htm>.

- Ministry of External Affairs (2019d), Ministry of External Affairs. EAM Visits [official data website]. Retrieved from <https://mea.gov.in/eam-visits.htm>.
- Ministry of External Affairs (2019e), Ministry of External Affairs. Bilateral/Multilateral Documents [official data website]. Retrieved from [https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?53/Bilateral/Multilateral\\_Documents](https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?53/Bilateral/Multilateral_Documents).
- The President of India (2019), The President of India. Shri Ram Nath Kovind [official website]. Retrieved from <https://presidentofindia.nic.in/>.
- Vice President of India (2019), Vice President of India. Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu [official website]. Retrieved from <https://vicepresidentofindia.nic.in/>.

### Press releases & speeches

- Press release (2018a), Press release. State Visit of President to Cyprus, Bulgaria and Czech Republic (September 02-09) [official website]. Retrieved from [https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/30341/State\\_Visit\\_of\\_President\\_to\\_Cyprus\\_Bulgaria\\_and\\_Czech\\_Republic\\_September\\_0209\\_2018](https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/30341/State_Visit_of_President_to_Cyprus_Bulgaria_and_Czech_Republic_September_0209_2018).
- Press release (2018b), Press release. Official Visit of Vice President to Serbia, Malta and Romania (September 14-20) [official website]. Retrieved from [https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/30381/Official\\_Visit\\_of\\_Vice\\_President\\_to\\_Serbia\\_Malta\\_and\\_Romania\\_September\\_1420\\_2018](https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/30381/Official_Visit_of_Vice_President_to_Serbia_Malta_and_Romania_September_1420_2018).
- Press release (2019a), Press release. Visit of External Affairs Minister to Bulgaria, Morocco and Spain (February 16-19) [official website]. Retrieved from [https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/31052/Visit\\_of\\_External\\_Affairs\\_Minister\\_to\\_Bulgaria\\_Morocco\\_and\\_Spain\\_February\\_1619\\_2019](https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/31052/Visit_of_External_Affairs_Minister_to_Bulgaria_Morocco_and_Spain_February_1619_2019).
- Press release (2019b), Press release. State Visit of the President of India to Croatia, Bolivia and Chile (March 25 – April 2) [official website]. Retrieved from [https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/31172/State\\_Visit\\_of\\_the\\_President\\_of\\_India\\_to\\_Croatia\\_Bolivia\\_and\\_Chile\\_March\\_25\\_\\_April\\_2\\_2019](https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/31172/State_Visit_of_the_President_of_India_to_Croatia_Bolivia_and_Chile_March_25__April_2_2019).
- Speech (2016), Speech. Vice President's Lecture on 'Indian Democracy: Achievements and Challenges' at Corvinus University, Budapest, Hungary [official website]. Retrieved from <https://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?27522/Vice+Presidents+Lecture+on+Indian+Democracy+Achievements+and+Challenges+at+Corvinus+University+Budapest+Hungary>.
- Speech (2017), Speech. Address by Vice President at Business Seminar at Ministry of Economic Development, Warsaw (April 27) [official website]. Retrieved from <https://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?28421/Address+by+Vice+President+at+Business+Seminar+at+Ministry+of+Economic+Development+Warsaw+April+27+2017>.

### Monographs & chapters in monographs

- BANERJEE-DUBE, I. (2015), *A History of Modern India*. New Delhi.
- BERRIDGE, G. R./JAMES, A. (2003), *A Dictionary of Diplomacy*. New York.
- DAHL, M. (2015), *Polityka zagraniczna Indii i Turcji pod rządami Narendry Modiego i Ahmeta Davutoğlu – podobieństwa, różnice, perspektywy rozwoju relacji bilateralnych*. In: Bryc, A./Dahl, M./Lewicka, M. (eds.), *Bliski Wschód w procesie przemian*. Toruń, 79-113.
- DOMŻALSKI, S. (2017), *Indie w gospodarce światowej. Słoń, który pragnął latać*. Warszawa.
- IWANIEK, K./BURAKOWSKI, A. (2013), *Indie. Od kolonii do mocarstwa 1857-2013*. Warszawa.
- FOREWORD (2000), *Central and South-Eastern Europe*. London.
- GANGULY, S. (2015), *Indian Foreign Policy*. Oxford.
- GARLICK, J. (2019), *The Impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative: From Asia to Europe*. Abingdon.

- GETKA, J. (2015), Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia w perspektywie interdyscyplinarnej. In: Getka, J./Grzybowski, J./Kramar, R. (eds.), *Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia w perspektywie interdyscyplinarnej*. Warszawa, 9-10.
- HALL, I. (2019), *Modi and the Reinvention of Indian Foreign Policy*. Bristol.
- JAISHANKAR, S. (2020), *The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World*. New Delhi.
- LEANDRO, F./DUARTE, P. (eds.) (2020), *The Belt and Road Initiative: An Old Archetype of a New Development Model*. London.
- MENON, S. (2016), *Choices: Inside the Making of India's Foreign Policy*. Washington.
- NOWIK, M. (2016), *Between Theory and Practice of India's Development Assistance*. Wrocław.
- OSIEWICZ, P. (2009), Indie jako mocarstwo. In: Potyrała, A./Skobrtal, M. (eds.), *Indie w XXI wieku. Wybrane problemy*. Poznań, 191-198.
- METCALF, B. D./METCALF, T.R. (2012), *A Concise History of Modern India*. New York.
- PANDE, A. (2018), *From Chanakya to Modi: Evolution of India's Foreign Policy*. New Delhi.
- PANT, H. V. (ed.) (2019), *New Directions in India's Foreign Policy: Theory and Praxis*. Cambridge.
- ROTHERMUND, D. (2010), *Indie. Nowa azjatycka potęga*. Warszawa.
- SINGH, A. K. (2019), *India's Foreign Policy 2020: Asia's Rising Superpower*. New Delhi.
- TOMASZEWSKA, P./DAHL, M. (2019), Implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative in Selected Balkan States. In: Marszałek-Kawa, J./Dahl, M. (eds.), *Understanding Asia: Political, Economic and Socio-Cultural Dimensions*. Toruń, 69-85.

#### **Online sources**

- GILBERT, K. (2018, May 29), Countries That Recognize Kosovo. Retrieved from <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/which-countries-recognize-kosovo-as-a-country.html>.
- IWANIEK, K. (2019, April 3), Reviewing India's Foreign Policy Toward Europe Under Narendra Modi. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/reviewing-indias-foreign-policy-toward-europe-under-narendra-modi/>.
- JAISHANKAR, D. (2018, September 5), Here's why central and eastern Europe may become an area of promise for India. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/heres-why-central-and-eastern-europe-may-become-an-area-of-promise-for-india/>.
- The World Bank. (2019), GDP, PPP (current international \$) [data website]. Retrieved from [https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.CD?locations=IN&name\\_desc=false](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.CD?locations=IN&name_desc=false).



