

India and Germany: Achieving a Value Based Partnership with Interest

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Introduction

Indo-German relations that are founded on mutual respect, trust, and an adherence to democratic principles, have grown steadily in the recent years. In December 2022, during the visit of German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock to India she stated “For us India is the natural partner to sail this rough sea together. Because if you’re going out on rough seas, you have to trust your partners”¹. Today, areas of Indo-German engagement have expanded beyond the traditional economic focus, to encompass the Indo-Pacific region, climate change and sustainability, emerging technology and renewable energy. Through this policy brief we take a critical look at existing and evolving Indo-German relations to determine the scope for a ‘value based partnership with interest’. Such an approach will not only deepen

the bilateral relationship, but also further common goals of equity and equality.

Our perspective leans on the Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) discourse, which ultimately offers an approach (and not a solution) to prioritize the values of equality and inclusion. Inclusive policymaking goes beyond gender, and must be instituted as a mechanism through which the perspectives of vulnerable, marginalised, and disadvantaged groups are taken into consideration; an approach that needs to be contextualised to countries and regions, without losing these core values. We advocate that any country may take such an approach rooted strongly within its own unique geo-political context, whether it is termed FFP or not.

Background

The German government, in their Coalition Agreement 2021–2025, unanimously decided to adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) using the 3R + D framework – Rights, Resources, Representation, plus Diversity. Concrete efforts towards bringing a systemic change for gender mainstreaming began much earlier in 2018, when Germany’s former foreign minister pressed for parity in representation in the German Foreign Office. This led to the publication of a ‘Diversification Plan’ that set out targets for the inclusion of all marginalised groups². In 2020, the Federal Ministry published a report on ‘Gender Equality in German Foreign Policy and the

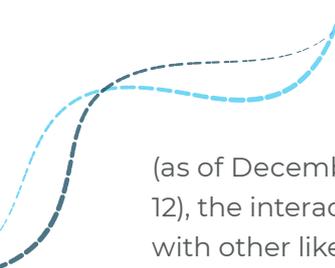
Federal Foreign Office’ that comprehensively outlines how the ministry values gender equality while referring to other countries’ FFPs and mentions implementing the WPS agenda³. In 2022, a formal announcement of the intent of an FFP was made. The approach and understanding was that the government would push for and advocate hearing more voices and including all perspectives to ensure peace and security in the long term. In 2022, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) also announced that it was formulating a Feminist Development Strategy⁴.

“A feminist foreign policy isn’t about excluding, but about including people. This isn’t a question of hearing fewer voices, but MORE voices – all the voices of society. And feminist foreign policy is not a ‘women’s issue’. If half the population are unable to have their say as equals, no society can fully attain its potential. And if half of the world’s population are excluded, we cannot ensure peace and security in the long term.”⁵ – Annalena Baerbock, Federal Foreign Minister, Germany.

Our research has shown evidence of significant gender mainstreaming in India’s Foreign Policy, going back several decades, especially through our development assistance programmes in partner countries. From women peacekeeping forces to bringing a strong women empowerment lens in technical and economic cooperation programmes, India has shown leadership in this regard. The representation of women in the Ministry of External Affairs is also increasing and stands at around 21.6%⁶; the annual intake of women and people from diverse groups across the country indicates that there will eventually be a more diverse make-up of the ministry in the coming

years. India’s climate diplomacy, overseas development cooperation, and approach to multilateralism also demonstrate the presence of gender mainstreaming. The announcement of ‘Mission LiFE’ at the beginning of India’s G20 Presidency strongly advocates for women-led development and progress.

Evidence from countries like India indicates that greater inclusivity and equity can be advocated for and operationalised without explicitly announcing a FFP, while a more structured approach could ensure that such policies are lasting. As more countries adopt or announce the intention to adopt a FFP



(as of December 2022 the number stands at 12), the interaction between such countries with other likeminded countries sans FFP will also need to be defined. India and

Germany are well positioned to explore the opportunity to understand how policies may be contextualised, beneficial in the long term and meaningful.

Snapshot of Indo-German History

The relationship between India and Germany can be traced back to 1951, when India was one of the first countries to recognise and establish diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany⁷. The engagement has strengthened over time, through several high-level bilateral visits, the May 2000 Agenda for the Indo-German Partnership in the 21st century (updated regularly through joint declarations)⁸, and Indo-German intergovernmental consultations at the cabinet level (held every two years since 2011)⁹. Former Chancellor Angela Merkel's 2015 visit to India for the third round of intergovernmental consultations cemented this relationship and was described as a 'turning point' in India-Germany relations by the German Embassy in India¹⁰. In 2022 the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz met three times, far more than the usual frequency of meetings at that level. Indian Prime Minister Modi, after his June 2022 visit to Germany, expressed, "I am confident India-Germany friendship will scale newer heights in the times to come."¹¹

There are already several institutionalised arrangements to discuss and further bilateral and global issues of interest, such as the Strategic Dialogue, Foreign Office Consultations, Joint Commission on Industrial and Economic Cooperation, High Technology Partnership Group, High Defence Committee and Joint Working Group on

Counter-Terrorism, Indo-German Consultative Group, etc¹². Climate change and energy will be central to cooperation between the two countries, with the signing of the declaration of intent for the Indo-German Partnership for Green and Sustainable Development in May 2022. Recently, Germany has also prioritised developing a strategic partnership with India in its Indo-Pacific strategy¹³. New and emerging global challenges will need ideas and solutions rooted in the common values that both India and Germany advocate, and it is therefore in the interest of both countries to ensure that an inclusion lens is brought into all mechanisms of cooperation.

Realities of considering a gender lens in Indo-German relations

The understanding of diversity and inclusion is context specific, and while the concept of inclusivity is central to both countries, the approaches can differ. There is a framework of inclusiveness in India which is different from the European and Western framework, often due to historical experiences, socio-economic constructs, and realities. This distinction is important to acknowledge for a deeper, more robust, bilateral partnership. While a western lens might often consider a gender lens or representation as a key component of change, for India it is essential to take an intersectional approach, which considers economic class, caste, religion or even

geography. Hence, while committing to the value of inclusion, we must acknowledge that what inclusive means in practice might differ based on context. There are also limits on the understanding of our 'like-mindedness', which need to be considered and deconstructed. Acknowledging the gap between the

two countries in terms of perspectives will help create spaces to strengthen our understanding of each other, given that the core value systems of an inclusive and equitable approach do not differ and form the basis of the relationship. This will in turn strengthen work on existing mutual interests.

A Value-Based Partnership With Interest

Climate change, trade and energy are key components of the growing cooperation between India and Germany. These are areas where the values of equity and inclusivity can come into play. Inclusivity can be twofold. On the one hand, there must be diversity in terms of representation in various rooms, and discussions. On the

other hand, recognizing larger geopolitical power imbalances, there must be space to understand and acknowledge the contextual differences between countries. Indo-German cooperation in this regard, which is open and inclusive in nature, could be the starting point for building an inclusive partnership with interest.

Climate Action

In 2015, Prime Minister Modi and former Chancellor Angela Merkel recognised the importance of “renewable energy and the efficient use of energy” as mitigation measures to tackle climate change¹⁴. The focus of the cooperation has been on technology and innovation around renewable sources of energy and energy transitions, where there is a strong economic aspect to the engagement. While international discourse has recognized the role of an inclusion lens in climate-related decision-making processes, this lens is often missing at an Indo-German and India-EU level.

In 2021, Germany announced 1.2 billion Euros in development commitments to aid India's fight against climate change¹⁵, and in 2022 pledged 10 billion Euros by 2030 to boost clean energy¹⁶. More recently in May 2022, the Indo-German Hydrogen Task Force was

announced¹⁷, to catalyse India's aspiration and capacity to become a hub for green hydrogen production. This laid the groundwork for the May 2022 “Joint Declaration of Intent for Establishing the Indo-German Partnership for Green and Sustainable Development”¹⁸. Such a partnership will no doubt increase the interaction as well as engagement between Indian and German entities including companies, governments, research and education institutions. Alongside German investment, Indian private sector is also equally invested in the development of renewable energy. Private sector players including Reliance Industries, Adani Group, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) are investing in hydrogen and renewable energy projects in India. Reliance Industries has a target of achieving net-zero carbon by 2035 and are



investing over USD 10 billion, while BPCL announced an ambitious plan to invest up to USD 3.36 billion in building a diversified renewables portfolio that will include solar, wind, small hydro and biomass.

Through the myriad programmes and investment in climate action, adaptation and mitigation measures, it is important that the gender lens is kept in focus. Women and children are some of the most vulnerable from climate related events and disasters. While it has been recognised that their voices and perspectives need to be included in policy planning and action, this recognition is not always put into practice. In India for example,

in the solar energy sector, women account for only 11% of the workforce in the rooftop solar sector, significantly lesser than the global average of women in the renewables sector, which is at 32%¹⁹. Low participation rates in policy level decision-making further exacerbate inequalities and prevent women from contributing to climate and energy policy formulation. Collectively pushing for and promoting women as decision-makers and leaders in environment management, disaster preparedness and sustainable livelihood adoption will yield climate and economic benefits and serve to encourage strategies in partner countries.

Energy Futures

India looks at climate and energy futures as intertwined. This is an integral aspect of bilateral relationships, especially with Germany and other European counterparts, and a central plank of its foreign policy in the region. Germany formally applies a climate lens to its foreign policy outreach²⁰ which is something that India is also adopting in various platforms, policies and international forums but not yet as a formal foreign policy. This can then set a benchmark for India-Germany climate cooperation and consolidate their collective growing footprint in climate diplomacy. More importantly, it can allow for India to share its expertise with the world: Indian efforts have helped create global climate norms, push for historically polluting nations to take on greater responsibility, bring together voices of other Global South countries for more equitable financing norms, and promote the principles of 'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities'. Speaking specifically to green and renewable energy cooperation,

the transition will fundamentally change the nature of energy security, our mutual dependencies, and potentially serve to create competition with China's manufacturing prowess. This however must be viewed as an opportunity for future cooperation, and to build and shape new structural ties between the EU and India.

Gender as a component exists in all areas of foreign policy and trade policy, but opportunities exist especially in the way it could be implemented. India and Germany need to identify where their strengths lie, first as individual countries, and then in their partnership, thus working collectively on common ground. The potential to add a gender lens to energy futures is limitless, and a strong gender lens could ensure that eventually learning can be applied to other areas of foreign policy that work towards a more humane and sustainable future.

Trade Momentum

Trade is another key area of engagement between India and Germany, where bringing inclusive values could have positive cascading effects. Today, Germany is India's largest trading partner in Europe²¹. Bilateral trade between the countries grew 17.15% to USD 21.98 billion during 2017-2018²². As of 2021, exports from Germany to India have amounted to USD 12.1 billion while Germany imports more than USD 8.8 billion worth of goods from India²³. There are several bilateral initiatives to encourage the participation of women in business. The 'Female Entrepreneurship in Berlin and India (FEBI)' project supports women-led companies in both countries (and the broader South Asian and Western European region) through networking, training, and delegation trips²⁴. Similarly, the 'HerAndNow' campaign, jointly developed and implemented by GIZ, BMZ, and the Indian Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, has so far supported over 900 women entrepreneurs from 12 states across India²⁵. Thus far, there has been a top-down approach to include women in international trade. The right kind of incentives can enable Indian women entrepreneurs to be a part of the international trade ecosystem, which remains a heavily male dominated

industry. As trade negotiations are slow and complicated processes, this provides the opportunity for parallel mechanisms.

For one, setting up a gender trade advisory group (or an equivalent) that looks at FTAs through a gender lens. An actionable starting point could be the facilitating of exchanges between women-led business delegations, which can deepen cross-cultural understanding, and strengthen diplomacy. It is also important to have more women as negotiators. Evidence points towards the fact that gender-specific provisions in trade agreements can mitigate barriers to trade for women. Relative to men, women often face greater time constraints, higher border costs, and weaker domestic legal protection, as well as challenges posed by gender segregation of the services sector²⁶. The Germany-India startup corridor²⁷ that has witnessed recent momentum and the German Indian Startup Exchange Program (GINSEP) are existing avenues where gender disparity in entrepreneurs can be addressed, further enabling women entrepreneurs²⁸ to be a part of the international trade ecosystem and the international service economy.

Global Governance

At an event hosted by Research and Information System, New Delhi, in June 2022, on coordination between the G7 and G20, there was a significant focus on climate change and energy transition between India and Germany, where it was stated that ‘cooperation and coordination between the advanced country grouping G7 and the developed country-emerging economy multilateral strategic platform G20 is crucial to find innovative, viable and effective solutions to the ongoing global challenges including food insecurity, public health crisis, supply chain disruption and fossil fuel dependency’. The underlying sentiment at that event and other significant global multilateral spaces is that India and Germany are well-poised and suited to work together to bring their collective values to ongoing debate and decision-making systems. Values of equity and inclusivity with a strong advocacy for greater gender mainstreaming can bring about gender intentional action.

When contextualized against the broader multilateral commitment on climate through the Paris Agreement and UNFCCC, and through frameworks like the SDGs, the momentum of engagement denotes a collective high-level commitment to climate action and climate change solutions. Two key areas of mutual multilateral interest are the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).

In 2021, Germany signed the International Solar Alliance Framework Agreement, signifying its commitment to an India and Global South led forum to ensure access to solar energy. The German government is cooperating with the CDRI to promote disaster and climate resilient infrastructure, both for existing as well as future projects, in India and in other CDRI member states. India and Germany also aim to enhance Triangular Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and Africa, to “build on individual strengths and experiences in development cooperation and offer sustainable, viable and inclusive projects to third countries”. Germany can work with India to ensure that traditional and indigenous knowledge is brought to the fore and the perspectives of most vulnerable groups are heard.

At the UNSC, both India and Germany support each other’s bid to join the P5 group of countries in the Permanent Council, under the G4 group, comprising Germany, India, Brazil, and Japan. Regionally, points of convergence in the Indo-Pacific, one of the most geopolitically significant regions of the world, cannot be understated. Germany’s 2020 Indo-Pacific policy prioritises cooperation in the region and strengthening security and strategic partnerships. As a net security provider in the region, India, given its role in Indo-Pacific multilaterals and minilaterals, has a significant role to play in realising Germany and the EU’s Indo-Pacific strategy.

Conclusion

This policy brief puts forth two concepts that may help articulate inclusivity for India and Germany to effectively use such an approach in strengthening existing areas of partnership. The first being an endeavour to upgrade the strategic partnership to a value-based partnership with interest. The second is converging on common areas of interest to push forward common agenda through various fora. There are several convergences between the areas of climate change, energy, trade, global governance, within which the Indo-German engagement is operationalised. We propose bringing an inclusionary lens as a grid that cuts across areas of cooperation

as well as levels of engagement within those areas. For example, both India and Germany are federal republics and federal democracies, where different regional issues and considerations come into play, an aspect which is an often overlooked. Nurturing cooperation between different states from the federal level could complement existing climate, energy, and trade policies. This will help create a better and more thorough understanding of both countries from the ground-up at a local level, and depending on specific locations, industries, and contexts, climate, energy, and trade policies can be adapted to be more inclusive.

This short brief is a part of a series by Kubernein Initiative and the India Office of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung to bring an inclusivity lens to various aspects of India's Foreign Policy engagement; the focus on India-Germany is the second. Along with research, KI engaged in roundtables, interviews, and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and experts to identify challenges and gaps and design ways forward, with the caveat that this is a relationship with a multitude of interest and engagements, and this particular brief touches upon a few overarching aspects. We will continue to delve deeper into these issues and invite you to engage with us at – director@kuberneininitiative.com

About Kubernein Initiative

Kubernein Initiative is an independent, female led, geopolitical advisory firm based in Mumbai (India) working to mainstream issues that need greater intellectual capacity and focus such as water and climate change, gender and foreign policy.

About Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation with 16 regional offices in Germany and over 120 offices abroad. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation is committed to achieving and maintaining peace, freedom and justice through political education.

End Notes

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