

MP-IDSA *Commentary*

The Changing Landscape of India-Germany Defence Cooperation

Shayesta Nishat Ahmed

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S*ummary*

The India-Germany defence partnership is increasingly focusing on co-development, co-production, technology transfer and supply-chain resilience.

Introduction

Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh visited the Federal Republic of Germany from 21 to 23 April 2026. The visit, coming shortly after German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's January 2026 visit to India, reflected a broader convergence of strategic interests between the two countries amid an increasingly volatile global security environment. Discussions centred on defence-industrial cooperation, technology transfer, and the implementation of the newly signed Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap, signalling a transition in bilateral ties from traditional defence trade to long-term industrial collaboration. Along with the defence industrial roadmap, the 'Implementing Arrangement for Cooperation in UN Peacekeeping Training' was inked and exchanged during the meeting.¹

India and Germany marked 25 years of their Strategic Partnership in 2025. The bilateral ties have gained renewed momentum in the backdrop of evolving geopolitical tensions and regional conflicts.² Russia's war in Ukraine, instability in West Asia, disruptions to global supply chains, and uncertainty surrounding transatlantic security arrangements have compelled European states to reassess defence preparedness and industrial resilience. New Delhi and Berlin see each other as essential partners in navigating the new fragments of the unravelling global order.³

Against this backdrop, Germany's focus on defence-industrial revitalisation, rearmament, and greater engagement in the Indo-Pacific has converged with India's drive for defence indigenisation under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative. As a result, the bilateral relationship is gradually moving beyond a buyer-seller model towards a partnership centred on co-development, co-production, technology transfer and supply-chain resilience. This shift has been institutionalised through the Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap, which seeks to expand collaboration in naval systems, ammunition production, defence electronics and emerging technologies. The roadmap also complements Germany's 'Focus on India'⁴ strategy and the broader India–European Union Security and Defence Partnership (SDP), providing a framework for long-term cooperation.⁵

¹ ["Raksha Mantri & his German Counterpart Hold Bilateral Talks in Berlin to Bolster Strategic Defence Partnership"](#), Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 22 April 2026.

² ["India – Germany Foreign office Consultations \(April 14, 2026\)"](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 14 April 2026.

³ Ashutosh Nagda, ["The Merz Visit and Strategic Realism in the India-Germany Partnership"](#), Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), 20 January 2026.

⁴ ["Focus on India"](#), German Federal Foreign Office, The Federal Government of Germany, 16 October 2024.

⁵ ["Towards 2030: A Joint India-European Union Comprehensive Strategic Agenda"](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 27 January 2026.

Contours of Cooperation

Germany’s evolving security outlook, shaped by the Russia–Ukraine conflict, concerns over European defence preparedness, and uncertainties in transatlantic security commitments, has prompted Berlin to strengthen its defence-industrial base, diversify strategic partnerships, and build resilient supply chains.⁶ This approach was reflected in Germany’s 2025 National Security and Defence Industry Strategy, which emphasised greater strategic autonomy while maintaining its commitments within NATO.⁷ At the same time, its growing interest in the Indo-Pacific and maritime security has increased the importance of partnerships with key regional actors such as India.

For India, cooperation with Germany supports the broader objectives of defence indigenisation, technological advancement, and supply chain diversification under the ‘Make in India’ and ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ initiatives. The India–Germany Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap signed in 2026 builds upon Germany’s 2024 ‘Focus on India’ strategy and the Joint Declaration of Intent on Bilateral Defence Industrial Cooperation.⁸ The roadmap seeks to expand collaboration across naval systems, ammunition production, defence electronics and emerging technologies.

Naval and Underwater Capabilities

Naval cooperation has emerged as the most advanced component of India–Germany defence relations. The centrepiece of this engagement is Project-75(I), India’s programme to acquire six advanced conventional submarines equipped with Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) systems under the Strategic Partnership Model.⁹ The partnership between Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems (TKMS) and Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) is nearing final approval from the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS).¹⁰ It represents one of the most significant defence-industrial collaborations currently under consideration between the two countries.

Valued at approximately Rs 70,000 crore (around US\$ 9 billion), the project aims to strengthen indigenous submarine-building capabilities through extensive technology

⁶ [“National Security and Defence Industry Strategy”](#), Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, The Federal Government of Germany, 14 April 2025.

⁷ Harsh V. Pant, [“A Strategic Shift in India-Germany Defence Ties”](#), Observer Research Foundation (ORF), 4 May 2026.

⁸ [“Focus on India”](#), no. 4.

⁹ [“DAC Approval for Indigenous Construction of Six Project 75\(I\) Submarines Under Strategic Partnership Model”](#), Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 31 January 2019.

¹⁰ Sanjeev K. Jha and Rahul Singh, [“Centre Okays ₹70,000-crore Deal for Six Made-in-India Submarines”](#), *Hindustan Times*, 29 May 2026.

transfer and an estimated 45–60 per cent indigenous content.¹¹ The programme is central to the Indian Navy’s submarine modernisation plans and will enhance its underwater warfare capabilities.¹² During the visit to Germany, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inspected a Type-212 submarine at the TKMS shipyard in Kiel.¹³ For Germany, the project strengthens its position within one of the world’s largest defence markets while establishing long-term industrial linkages with Indian shipbuilders and suppliers.

Cooperation is also expanding into underwater weapons systems. In March 2026, Hyderabad-based VEM Technologies and TKMS signed a Teaming Agreement to develop and manufacture heavyweight torpedoes in India, building on their September 2025 MoU.¹⁴ The partnership involves the transfer of torpedo technologies from TKMS and ATLAS ELEKTRONIK to facilitate indigenous production for the Indian Navy, with plans for a long-term joint venture and potential exports.¹⁵ The project is expected to strengthen India’s underwater warfare capabilities and support Project 75(I). Additionally, in 2025, TKMS partnered with Mumbai-based CFF Fluid Control Limited to jointly develop and manufacture advanced anti-submarine warfare (ASW) systems, further enhancing India’s maritime defence capabilities and expanding Indo-German defence-industrial cooperation.¹⁶

Beyond current areas of cooperation, India and Germany continue to build on a longstanding naval partnership through the life-extension and modernisation of the Indian Navy’s Shishumar-class submarines. Under a Rs 2,725-crore contract, MDL is undertaking the Medium Refit and Life Certification (MRLC) of *INS Shankush*, with technical support, specialised equipment, and hull inspections provided by TKMS.¹⁷ The programme aims to enhance the submarine’s operational life and combat capabilities, helping address the Indian Navy’s submarine shortfall until new platforms enter service. It follows the successful refit of *INS Shishumar* in 2018,

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Snehash Alex Philip, [“India Hopes to Seal Submarine Contract with Germany this Fiscal, MDL Pares Down Cost ‘Significantly’”](#), *The Print*, 1 December 2025.

¹³ [“Co-develop and Co-produce with India in Niche Tech for Secured National Interests and Global Stability & Resilience: Raksha Mantri to German Industry Captains in Munich”](#), Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 23 April 2026.

¹⁴ [“‘Make-in-India’ Heavyweight Torpedoes on the way with VEM-TKMS Agreement”](#), *The Hindu Bureau*, 10 March 2026.

¹⁵ [“Deepening the Strategic Partnership: TKMS and VEM Sign Teaming Agreement for Joint Torpedo Production in India”](#), TKMS, Press Release, 10 March 2026.

¹⁶ [“Strengthening Local Partnerships: TKMS Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Indian Defense Company VEM Technologies Pvt. Ltd.”](#), TKMS, Press Release, 3 September 2025.

¹⁷ [“MoD Signs a Contract of Rs. 2725 Cr with Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd for Medium Refit with Life Certification of Submarine INS Shankush”](#), Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 30 June 2023.

which extended the vessel’s service life by a decade. The project reflects a longstanding history of Indo-German submarine cooperation dating back to the 1980s, when HDW (now part of TKMS) and MDL collaborated on the construction of four Type 209/1500 submarines for the Indian Navy under a technology transfer programme.¹⁸

Ammunitions

A second major area of cooperation is ammunition production and defence manufacturing. The prolonged conflict in Ukraine has highlighted the strategic importance of ammunition stockpiles and exposed limitations in European defence-industrial capacity. As a result, European defence firms are increasingly seeking partnerships that can expand production capacity and strengthen supply-chain resilience. Germany’s defence-industrial engagement with India has expanded through partnerships involving Diehl Defence, Rheinmetall and Reliance Defence. Building on a 2019 cooperation agreement, Diehl Defence and Reliance Defence have advanced collaboration on the production of the Vulcano 155 mm Precision Guided Munition system under the Make in India-II framework, with Reliance serving as the prime contractor and Diehl providing technology and expertise.¹⁹ The programme aims to achieve over 50 per cent indigenous content.

Simultaneously, Reliance Defence and Rheinmetall have entered into a strategic partnership to manufacture ammunition, explosives and propellants, supported by a large-scale facility capable of producing up to 200,000 artillery shells, 10,000 tonnes of explosives, and 2,000 tonnes of propellants annually for both domestic use and export markets.²⁰ Both initiatives are to be supported by Reliance Defence’s upcoming manufacturing facility in the Watad Industrial Area in Ratnagiri, within the Dhirubhai Ambani Defence City (DADC) in Maharashtra. For Reliance Defence, the agreement represents its fourth major international defence partnership after collaborations with Dassault Aviation, Thales and Rheinmetall, strengthening its position in the guided-munitions sector while advancing indigenous manufacturing capabilities for domestic requirements and export markets.²¹

¹⁸ Abhay Kumar Singh and S. Samuel C. Rajiv, [“P75 \(1\) Submarines and Strategic Partnership Model”](#), Issue Brief, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 28 March 2024.

¹⁹ [“Diehl Defence and Reliance Defence strengthen Strategic Partnership”](#), Diehl Defence, 10 June 2025.

²⁰ [“German-Indian Cooperation: Rheinmetall and Reliance Enter Into Strategic Partnership”](#), Rheinmetall AG, Media Release, 22 May 2025.

²¹ [“Reliance Defence Partners with Germany’s Diehl Defence to Boost India’s Precision Munition Capabilities”](#), Bharat Shakti, 10 June 2025.

Defence Electronics

Defence electronics constitute one of the most promising and strategically significant areas of India–Germany defence cooperation. As modern warfare becomes increasingly network-centric and technology-driven, military effectiveness depends more on advanced radar systems, sensors, avionics, secure communications and data-processing capabilities. In this context, German expertise in defence electronics offers valuable opportunities for India’s military modernisation and its objectives of technological self-reliance.

Cooperation in this sector has expanded considerably in recent years, with Germany’s HENSOLDT emerging as a key partner in supporting the development and indigenous production of advanced radar, sensor, and avionics technologies in India. At Aero India 2025, HENSOLDT signed agreements with Indian firms, including Raphe mPhibr, for the joint development of advanced Multiple Input, Multiple Output (MIMO) landing-aid radar systems designed to enhance navigation, surveillance and situational awareness for aerial platforms.²² The company also strengthened its partnership with Samtel Avionics to support domestic production of avionics equipment, including flight recorders, landing aid systems and secure communication technologies.²³

In addition, a technology transfer agreement with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) facilitated the localisation of Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR)-based obstacle-avoidance systems (OAS) for helicopters.²⁴ Cooperation in defence electronics signifies a transition from conventional platform-based collaboration to technology-driven partnerships centred on innovation, research and development, and advanced technical expertise.

Challenges and Way Forward

Despite the positive trajectory, certain challenges could affect the pace of cooperation. Technology transfer restrictions, export-control regulations, and lengthy procurement procedures continue to complicate defence-industrial collaboration. The regulatory framework for arms exports in Germany, and India’s

²² [“HENSOLDT to Expand Its India Footprint with Local Production”](#), *Economic Times*, 14 February 2025.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ [“Hindustan Aeronautics Limited \(HAL\) and HENSOLDT Sign Landmark Agreement at Dubai Airshow 2025 for Advanced Helicopter Obstacle Avoidance System \(OAS\)”](#), HENSOLDT, 19 November 2025.

complex acquisition processes may create implementation delays for major projects.²⁵ Additionally, the long-term success of technology transfer arrangements will depend on India’s ability to absorb advanced technologies and integrate them into domestic production ecosystems.²⁶

The growing role of Germany in India’s defence-industrial ecosystem should also be viewed in comparison with other European partners. Although France remains India’s most prominent European defence partner through programmes such as the Rafale fighter aircraft and Scorpène submarines, Germany has increasingly carved out a niche in conventional submarines, underwater systems, ammunition production and defence electronics. This complementary rather than competitive positioning may allow Germany to emerge as a significant long-term contributor to India’s defence modernisation efforts.

The convergence of Germany’s search for reliable manufacturing partners and India’s efforts to strengthen indigenous defence production have created strong incentives for closer cooperation. India–Germany defence ties could evolve into one of the most significant defence-industrial partnerships connecting Europe and the Indo-Pacific, supporting not only their respective security objectives but also broader efforts to build resilient supply chains and enhance stability in an increasingly uncertain global environment.

²⁵ Christian Wagner (ed.), “[India as a Partner of German Foreign Policy](#)”, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, SWP Research Paper 17, November 2024.

²⁶ Harsh V. Pant, “[A Strategic Shift in India-Germany Defence Ties](#)”, no. 7.

About the Author



Dr. Shayesta Nishat Ahmed is Research Analyst at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

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