



Indo-German Trade Continues its Dream Run in 2011

Bilateral business defies financial crisis and economic slowdown

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The bygone year, 2011, which witnessed the launch of a “Year of Germany” in India to commemorate 60 years of bilateral diplomatic relations between the two countries, saw a continued upswing in the business relations, as indeed in other spheres. The two countries have touted their relations as consisting of “infinite opportunities” and the latest data on foreign trade released by Germany’s Federal Statistical Office (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2012) seem to suggest that the opportunities are being actually utilized progressively.

The bilateral trade volume in calendar year 2011 registered a staggering growth of 18.7% and is estimated to have stood at €18.4 billion, up from €15.5 billion in 2010. The growth in bilateral exports and imports outperformed the overall growth in Germany’s trade. This is especially remarkable because the almost “hyper” growth comes in the backdrop of a continuing financial crisis in Europe (IMF, 2012) and an economic slowdown in India (GOI, 2012b). Table 1 shows developments in Germany’s exports to India and India’s relevance as export destination for German firms.

	2010	2011	Annual Growth
Germany’s exports to India	9.28	10.87	17.1%
Germany’s total exports	951.96	1060.20	11.4%
India’s Share in Germany’s exports	0.98%	1.03%	5.1%
India’s ranking as export partner	21	21	-----

Table 1: Germany’s exports to India in billion Euros and India’s relative position¹

¹ Based on: (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2011; 2012)

On similar lines, Table 2 shows developments in Germany's imports from India and India's relevance as source of imports for German firms.

	2010	2011	Annual Growth
Germany's imports from India	6.24	7.50	20.2%
Germany's total imports	797.10	901.96	13.2%
India's Share in Germany's imports	0.78%	0.83%	6.4%
India's ranking as export partner	26	25	-----

Table 2: Germany's imports from India in billion Euros and India's relative position²

The overall development in Indo-German trade since the turn of the millennium in 2000 is given in Figure 1. The figure illustrates the strong and positive growth in the bilateral trade which has largely defied any pressure for downward trends.

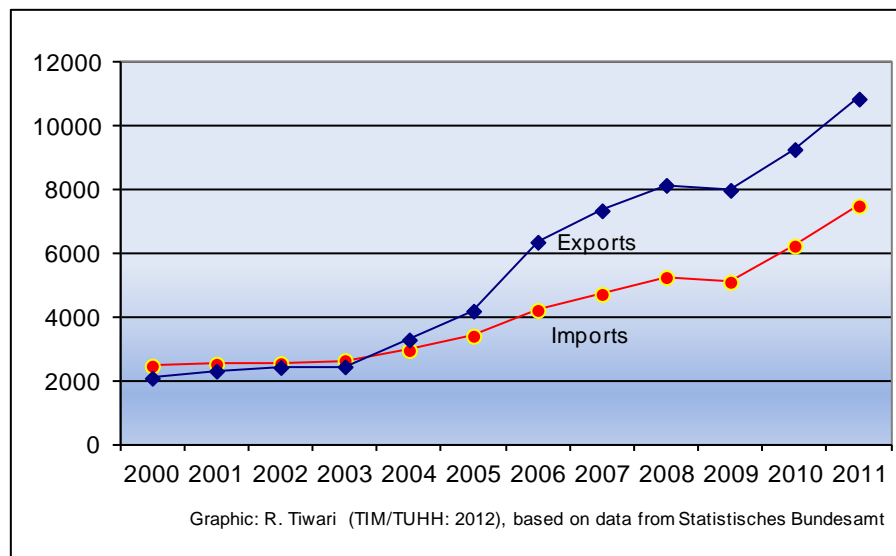


Figure 1: Germany's trade with India in million Euros (2000-2011)

Interestingly, India's growth in the previous decade has turned the balance of trade decisively in Germany's favour. Today, Germany's bilateral trade balance alone is higher than the volume of export about 6-7 years back. Since, *ceteris paribus*, India is set to witness sustained economic growth over a long period of time owing to its need to build infrastructure and due to consumption aspirations of a large and young population, we may expect the bilateral trade to continue touching new heights.

India's Ranking as Germany's Trade Partner

While India was Germany's 24th largest trade partner in 2010 (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2011), the previous year saw India climbing up the ladder by one rank, finishing as 23rd largest partner (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2012). While this is a positive development

² Based on: (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2011; 2012)

considering that India languished at 40th rank as Germany's export partner and was 36th placed as its source of imports in 2000, there is a significant room for improvement. The upward scope may be gauged by the fact that in 2011 much smaller economies like Poland and Slovakia had a higher trade volume with Germany than India did.

Room for Further Intensification

In this context it may be noted that German firms so far appear to have not fully captured on the Indian opportunity. As Figure 2 shows China and even Switzerland have much greater export volumes to India than Germany. Even though at the change of the millennium they roughly stood at the same point and way back in 1991, when India started its economic reforms, Germany was much better placed than these competitors.

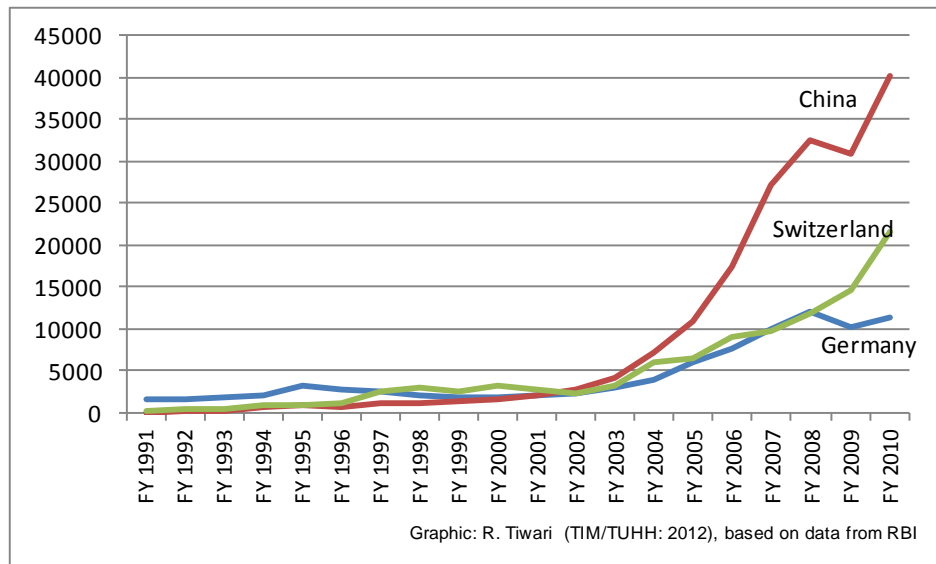


Figure 2: Developments in India's imports from Germany, China and Switzerland (million USD)³

A "More Realistic" Extent of the Bilateral Trade Relations

Notwithstanding the given room for improvement and further intensification of the bilateral trade relations, it might be useful to note that the data on foreign trade are, to some extent, an insufficient indicator of the "true" level of bilateral economic relations. This is mainly due to the following reasons:

- (i) Trade data usually relate only to merchandise trade, i.e. physical goods. Trade in services is not included in these data even though it constitutes a non-negligible volume. Bilateral figures for Indo-German trade in services are not easily available. However, one good indicator is provided by a recent report of the European Union (EU). In 2010, EU-India trade in commercial services stood at

³ Indian fiscal year (FY) runs from March of a given calendar year to April of the following year.

€19.3 billion, with a trade balance of €2.1 billion in favour of the EU (European Commission, 2012). Germany is the largest economy in the group of EU-27 and accounts for more than 20% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the EU-27 area (Eurostat, 2012). Therefore, it would not be an unfair assumption that a considerable share of the EU's trade in commercial services with India would involve Germany.

- (ii) India has seen a lot of foreign direct investments (FDI) from Germany and with a cumulated FDI volume of approximately \$4.3 billion it is India's 8th largest source of FDI (GOI, 2012a). Indian subsidiaries and affiliates of German companies are registered as local companies and their local production and sales do not get reflected in the trade data, even though they may involve large sums. Just to give one example: Siemens in India is registered as a publically listed company. In fiscal year 2010-11 its revenues from sales in India reportedly stood at €2.4 billion (Siemens, 2011). Similarly, the Robert Bosch Group in India generated sales revenues to the tune of €1.1 billion in FY 2010-11 (Bosch India, 2011). Along same lines, India has emerged as a key source of FDI in Germany (Tiwari and Herstatt, 2010; Tiwari, 2011) and Indian firms, too, generate revenues in Germany, which are not reflected by trade data.
- (iii) Finally, it is to be remembered that many Western multinational companies (MNCs), including from Germany, have offshored their production to low-cost locations such as China (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2008). It is therefore a reasonable assumption that in many instances foreign-based subsidiaries and affiliates of German MNCs would be exporting their products directly to India, without routing them via Germany. In such cases the transactions would be reflected in the trade data of the country from where the export took place and not in Germany's trade data.

For reasons discussed above, it seems to be a realistic assertion that the true extent of the Indo-German bilateral economic relations is much deeper than suggested by trade data.

Summarizing, we may say that the Indo-German bilateral relations have grown steadily over time and are on an excellent path. All indicators suggest that the relations will grow even deeper in the course of time. The opportunities presented by the sustained growth in India have to be recognized and captured, nonetheless. Maybe there is a lesson or two in understanding the trade path taken by competitors such as China, and especially Switzerland.

Since Swiss firms operate within a similar framework of constraints of high-costs as German firms. With Germany set to witness a festival of “Days of India” from May 2012 to March 2013, we may expect a further intensifying and greater dynamism in the bilateral relations.

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