The Angela Merkel era and India

Why in news?

As Chancellor Angela Merkel prepares to hand over power to a new coalition leader, an era ends in Germany and Europe.

Why is Angela Merkel's tenure so significant?

- Angela Merkel was the first woman Chancellor from the conservative party and has been the Chancellor for 16 years from 2005 to 2021.
- Her middle-of-the-road approach won her support at the domestic and European levels.
- Thrice she formed a government with the Social Democrats, termed the "Grand Coalition".
- As a strong export-based economy, Germany under Merkel outperformed France, the UK, Spain, and Italy in Europe, and posted robust exports behind only China and the US.
- During her tenure, the innovative "kurzarbeit" short-time work scheme saved thousands of jobs and prevented layoffs.

What impact has Germany under Merkel had on Europe and the world?

- Merkel's push for an austerity-based approach to the **Eurozone crisis** for bailout of Greece in 2010 made her very unpopular in European countries.
- In 2015, Germany took in a million of those who arrived in Europe during refugee crisis.
- Merkel has been seen as the crisis manager of the EU for her role in Europe's Brexit negotiations with the United Kingdom.
- She has also been called the "**climate chancellor**" for her role in pushing a low-carbon future for Germany and Europe.
- Angela could not bring a stronger action against Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Germany subsequently chose to go ahead with the Nord Stream 2 pipeline for gas supply.
- After 2016, Merkel came to be seen as the new "**leader of the free world**" for she addressed the impact of the pandemic in a timely manner with solidarity.

What about India's bilateral relationship with Germany under Merkel?

- **Inter-Governmental Consultations** - India and Germany have held five Cabinet-level Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC) meetings so far which signal the growing political engagement and economic partnership.
- The fifth IGC held in 2019 for which Merkel visited India, focussed on sustainable growth and a reliable international order.
- The IGC has expanded its scope to artificial intelligence and digital transformation, and pushed forward the '**Make in India Mittelstand**' programme.
- **Political level** - India and Germany have been at the forefront of the push for UN Security Council reform
- **Cultural level** - There has been joint investment in higher education to enable greater people-to-people contact and collaboration in education.

What are the unfinished tasks that India must now take up with Merkel's successor?

- New Delhi has to engage Berlin on enhancing the aspect of Germany's own strategy for the Indo-Pacific.
- There is scope to scale up defence cooperation.
- A major area of cooperation relates to climate change and building more sustainable energy solutions in India.
- Another would be investment in higher education and fast-tracking high-skilled Indian employment in Germany.

Source: The Indian Express

India-Germany Relations

India was amongst the first countries to establish diplomatic ties with the Federal Republic of Germany after the Second World War.

- **Strategic** - India and Germany have a "Strategic Partnership" since 2001.India is amongst a select group of countries with which Germany has Inter-Governmental Consultations at the level of Head of Governments (German Chancellor and PM)
- **Parliamentary Exchanges** – There is an Indo-German Parliamentary Friendship Group where visit by Parliamentarians from both sides take place regularly
- **Sister States** - Some States and Cities of India and Germany such as Karnataka and Bavaria have entered into twinning arrangements

- **Institutional Cooperation Arrangements** – Includes High Defence Committee, Indo-German Energy Forum, Indo-German Environment Forum, etc.
- **Defence Cooperation -** India-Germany Defence Cooperation Agreement (2006) provides a framework for bilateral defence cooperation
- **Economic & Commercial Relations** - Germany is India's largest trading partner in Europe and Germany is the 7th largest foreign direct investor in India
- **Science & Technology** - Intergovernmental S&T Cooperation Agreement was signed for fostering research projects and direct partnerships between Universities of both countries
- **Developmental cooperation** – Germany cooperates with India in the areas of smart cities, clean energy, clean ganga, etc.
- **Culture** - . Max Mueller was the first scholar of Indo-European languages to translate and publish the Upanishads and the Rigveda
- **Indian** diaspora in Germany - There are about 1.7 lakh Indians and people of Indian origin in Germany

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