KAS India Young Leaders Conclave
27.10.2023-29.10.23
Mussoorie

OUTCOME REPORT

Overview:

From 27th October – 29th October 2023, KAS India held a conclave for Young Leaders in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand. The conclave aimed to bring young politically involved leaders together and give them a chance to connect and discuss over a range of topics that influence but go also beyond politics. The German guest and speaker Mr. Jürgen Kornmann, Head of the Federal Office at BdKom (Bundesverband der Kommunikatoren e.V.) participated to amplify the diversity of perspectives and foster an Indo-German dialogue. The conclave's programme balanced formal sessions with opportunities for informal networking, aiming to create a comprehensive and enriching experience for all involved. The conclave served to empower emerging leaders to collaborate, share insights, and catalyze positive change while envisioning a more interconnected and inclusive future.

Programme:

KAS India Young Leaders Conclave

KAS India Young Leaders Conclave
Mussoorie (Uttarakhand), India
27.10.2023 – 29.10.2023

Programme

Friday, 27.10.2023

13.00 – 14.30 hours	**Arrival Lunch (for participants arriving at noon)**
Afternoon	**Arrival of Participants**
19.00 – 21.00 hours	**Inaugural Dinner and 'Meet and Greet'** Winter Terrace (behind Winter Hall, 6th Floor)

KAS India Young Leaders Conclave

Saturday, 28.10.2023

08:00– 09:00 hours	**Breakfast**
09:00 – 09:30 hours	**Registration**
09:30 – 10:30 hours	**Introductory Session**
10:30 – 13:00 hours	**Innovation Pitch** **Mr. Jürgen Kornmann, Mr. Sudhanshu Kaushik, Mr. Astik Sinha (Introduction by Dr. Adrian Haack)**
13:00 – 14:30 hours	**Lunch**
14:30 – 16:30 hours	**Roundtable: 'Besides Campaigning, Beyond Elections'** **Mr. Jürgen Kornmann**
16:30 – 17:00 hours	**Tea Break**
17:00 – 19:00 hours	**Free Time**
19:00 – 21:00 hours	**Dinner with Representatives of the Tibetan Community**

Sunday, 29.10.2023

08:00 – 09:00 hours	**Breakfast**
09:00 – 11:00 hours	**Parallel Sessions:** **Sustainability** **Mr. Ashish Gupta** **Foreign Policy** **Dr. Adrian Haack**
11:00 – 11:15 hours	**Tea Break**
11:15 – 12:00 hours	**Parallel Sessions:** **Gender & Politics** **Ms. Mara Mittelberger** **Digitalisation** **Mr. Jürgen Kornmann**
13:00 – 14:00 hours	**Lunch**
14:00 – 15:00 hours	**Free Time**

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15:00 – 18:00 hours	**Trekking**
18:00 – 20:00 hours	**Free Time**
20:00 hours	**Dinner with Business Community/Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Director (tbc)**

Monday, 30.10.2023

10:00 hours	**Post Breakfast Departures**

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Objectives:

The major objectives of the conclave were the following:
- Creating a dynamic platform that transcends traditional political boundaries, uniting young and politically engaged minds in meaningful discourse.
- Beyond the realm of politics, the conclave aimed to delve into multifaceted topics that shape societies, economies, and cultures globally.
- Fostering mutual understanding between India and Germany by shedding light on the discussed topics from both countries' perspectives.

DAY 1, 27th October 2023

Inaugural Dinner and 'Meet and Greet'

Dr. Haack, Director of KAS India provided a warm welcome to the participants, followed by a dinner for fostering connections and catching up.

DAY 2, 28th October 2023

Introductory Session

Dr. Haack welcomed the participants once again and highlighted the purpose of the conclave: creating a platform to exchange viewpoints and ideas. The conclave was also intended to expand conversations to be future-oriented beyond elections and politics towards innovation. Then everyone introduced themselves and their background, as well as expectations towards the conclave briefly. The participants have in common that they have entered the political arena at a young age, and their engagement spans from regional parties to large national parties. The participants were a diverse group of university scholars and assistant professors, politicians actively running for elections, party administration, NGOs.

Innovation Pitches

The three innovation pitches sparked discussions on cutting-edge topics that transcend conventional political boundaries, inspiring conversations about broader impacts of Innovation on society and forward-looking ideas. Mr. Jürgen Kornmann's and Mr. Astik Sinha's pitches revolved around Artificial Intelligence and Mr. Sudhanshu Kaushik's pitch focused on India's Youth.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Jürgen Kornmann, Head of the Federal Office at BdKom (Bundesverband der Kommunikatoren e.V.)

Astik Sinha, Addl PS to Union Minister of I&B, Youth Affairs & Sports

Mr. Kornmann started with an overview of the development of AI, which had its early beginnings in the 1950s and spanned from speech recognition to milestones such as the google translator in the 2000s and digital assistants such as Alexa and Siri in 2010. In the last two years, AI practically exploded as a topic and ChatGPT brought AI into many people's life. Mr. Kornmann highlighted the distinction between predictive and generative AI.

Predictive AI is dealing with algorithms as well as historical data and pattern recognition for predictions. It is used on social media, for instance on Instagram and TikTok, to maximize user engagement. This sparked a discussion about the responsibility to protect youth from addictive effects of predictive AI on social media. Key factors mentioned in this regard were digital literacy, through education and ethical social media design principles that prioritize user welfare.

Generative AI on the other hand comprises of text generation, image generation and sound generation. In Mr. Kornmann's Pitch this was illustrated by an AI-created picture of Gandhi and Konrad Adenauer, sitting on a bench in Mussoorie, as well as AI-generated translations between Hindi and English. Generative AI can create fakes including accurate gestures of people, which poses the threats of distorting the perception of history and news. Also, in the face of conflict, misinformation created by AI has led to larger skepticism and more chaos. Consequently, AI supervision, as well as the question of ethics and who should have access to such supervision were discussed.

AI itself could be used to supervise AI and also for fighting misinformation in general. Mr. Sinha named a platform where people could report fake news as an example, the AI could in return pick up certain key words and policy issues from these reports and conduct fact-checks. Reference was also made to the EU Data-Act and its emphasis on AI self-control. When it comes to state control of AI, the acquisition and management of data and expertise are crucial components. Governments therefore often collaborate with private entities, forming private partnerships that allow them to leverage private sector expertise and resources. Against this backdrop, finding the right balance between control and innovation is crucial. Excessive control measures could hinder progress and limit the potential benefits of AI, while an unchecked approach might lead to unforeseen risks and ethical dilemmas.

Throughout the discussion, it became apparent that around 50% of the group found AI to be helpful and the other half considered AI as dangerous, which overlaps with the opinion of German groups. An important step for living with AI would be educating people about its opportunities, dangers and how to use it as a tool. However, reaching illiterate people will pose a challenge in this respect. Opportunities, such as a lessened workload for humans on certain tasks, and risks of AI such as job loss, also were highlighted. Looking forward, it was noted that AI and big data rank as the 3rd most important skill priority of businesses, accompanied by the prediction that jobs will rather be replaced by people who can handle AI than by AI itself. Mr. Sinha finally highlighted the possibilities of AI in the political sphere, such as the chance to campaign in all 22 official languages of India and therefore communicate to more people, by using synthesizer that could translate videos. Also, the Holograms of Prime Minister Modi for his campaign in 2014 exemplify the usage of AI for campaigning and could possibly be used in different languages in the future. Many different platforms and mediums could be used through AI-supported campaigns, and it could be watched on demand.

India's Youth and Democracy

Mr. Kaushik started off his pitch with staggering numbers, such as that there are zero members of parliament below the age of 30 in India, noting that the youngest member of the Indian Parliament, Chandrani Murmu, was 25 when she was elected. The average age of Lok Sabha members is 61. This is to be seen against the backdrop that India has a population of approximately 670 million below 25 years of age and is accompanied by the fact that one of the biggest age groups has the lowest representation and vice versa. The Indian youth however generates around 34% of the country's income. The German parliament is comparatively younger, with 47 parliamentarians below 30 years at the last election in 2019. However, in Germany local leaders such as mayors are generally older than parliamentarians.

Sudhanshu Kaushik, Founder of Young India Foundation

Additionally, it was noted that India is placed on the lower end of the youth development index. Developed countries in general on the other hand, are witnessed to have younger representatives. The statement that the youth would not be interested in politics was identified as a big misperception by Mr. Kaushik. A bottleneck for youth participation, which was discussed was the age restriction for contesting to 25 years on Lok Sabha level and 21 years on Panchayat level. In contrast, being a judge and soldier is possible in India at a younger age. In many developed countries the age of contest is 18. On the other end, an age of retirement would also contribute to a devolution of power, however, is quite uncommon in the sphere of politics.

In the discussion, it was emphasized that other structural problems also impact the possibility to contest elections, such as safety concerns due to arrests and killings of politicians, a bad perception of politics being a "dirty business", as well as years being necessary for building relationships and getting to know the party workers for receiving the ticket to contest. Financing campaigning also poses a challenge to young politicians and not everyone in India has access to digital media, therefore costlier campaigns are needed to reach everyone. Furthermore, the expectation that academics should be finished before starting a political career contributes to the low number of young politicians. Therefore, youth parties and student politics should receive more recognition.

Beyond that, it was raised, that there are other ways of being part of the system than being an elected representative. Furthermore, young politicians do not necessarily bring up issues of the youth, so youth presentation does not automatically coincide with tackling youth issues. Often, young politicians in India come from the privileged position of taking over tickets of their parents and apart from this, being elected does not always coincide with being heard.

Dinner with Representatives of the Tibetan Community

The day concluded with a dinner with representatives of the Tibetan community - an enriching exchange, which highlighted the importance of advocating for diverse cultural identities. Stories, traditions, and insights were shared that shed light on the unique aspects of Tibetan culture, history, and heritage and its preservation in India.

Parallel Sessions

Sustainability

In the beginning of the session, a consensus was found that sustainability means meeting all our needs without depriving future generations of their needs, which goes beyond environment protection and entails sustaining resources for future generation equity. Discussion points included the government's responsibility to ensure that sustainability is achieved. The organization of waste disposal and waste treatment, supporting electric power vehicles, and funding research were mentioned as examples. Waste mismanagement impacts the whole ecosystem, including our own health through e.g. microplastic because of ocean pollution. The Swachh Bharat Mission was highlighted as a successful example of the Indian government fostering sustainability. In India the consumption per capita is comparatively low, but practices such as burning fields for harvest and plastic pollution cause sustainability problems and health hazards.

It was emphasized that a collaboration between all three levels of government is necessary, and that people need to be empowered at grassroot level to think critically and take action. The nexus between the business community and governance and evolving loopholes should also not be underestimated. Also models in development aid should be assessed and adjusted to local people's actual needs, which requires better communication with local people and authorities. It should also be taken into account that rural settings are closer to sustainability. Ancient India and its indigenous cultures until today practice a culture of worshipping nature and possess ancient wisdom - traditions could still be used as tools for environmental protection and should be empowered.

Foreign Policy

In general, it was observed that conflicts are increasing all over the world and that diplomacy is often on the retreat whereas conflicts are being resolved by rather by force. The importance of seeking economic independence was also discussed, particularly considering the fragility of international supply chains exposed by the COVID pandemic and the impact of the Ukraine conflict. The traditional belief in a globally interdependent economic system was questioned, urging a reevaluation of reliance on intricate international supply networks.

Participants also highlighted the necessity of pragmatism in foreign policy, noting that the sheer size of autocracies like China cannot be disregarded. The need to prioritize pragmatic self-interest over strictly value-based partnerships was also discussed. Therefore, foreign policy should be adaptable and not tethered to

ideological constraints. The Vishwaguru concept - India's aspirational role as a global teacher of wisdom and peace was recognized as a viable foreign policy approach, while others questioned its alignment with India's current global positioning and raised concerns about India's internal conflicts. However, consensus was found that India practices a pragmatic approach already.

Regarding India's foreign policy priorities, it became apparent that different issues are prevalent compared to German foreign policy. Regarding the relations to Russia, it was noted that Russia could not manoeuvre between India and China due to its dependence on China and it is not considered a reliable partner. The relations with China have moved to the centre of India's security policy, while Pakistan is rather a side issue. The conversation critically examined the last decade's improvements in relations with various nations, juxtaposing them against the challenges faced in the immediate neighborhood. For instance, while some countries experienced positive diplomatic shifts, others, like the Maldives and Sri Lanka, showcased complexities, including re-elections of pro-Chinese governments and political turbulence, respectively. The discussion also highlighted the impact of border closures on economic ties and the emergence of organized crime, particularly evident in Bangladesh, underscoring the intricate challenges faced in regional diplomacy and stability.

Gender & Politics

A focal point of the discussion were patriarchal structures, notably the glass ceiling that limits women's advancement in various spheres and the alarming issue of femicides. Also, normalized domestic violence emerged as a structural problem requiring urgent intervention. Participants also highlighted the need to address institutionalized discrimination and identify the agents perpetuating these biases. India's New Gender Quota Law and the need of quotas beyond politics were discussed, such as in corporate sectors, to increase women's presence in leadership roles and help to break through the glass ceiling. Another key point of the discussion was the necessity for more flexible gender roles, benefiting both men and women in society. The mention of India's first transgender college principal in West Bengal sparked conversations around societal perceptions and the strides made toward inclusivity. Furthermore, participants emphasized the need to recognize and value household work, which predominantly falls on women's shoulders yet remains undervalued and underpaid according to official statistics. Participants emphasized the pivotal role of the state in ensuring safe reporting spaces and consolidating provisions like maternity leave, drawing parallels to successful models in Germany where men can take parental leave.

Recognizing the vulnerability of women and children, participants stressed the importance of targeted funding allocation toward initiatives supporting their empowerment. The discussion culminated in a reflection on the interconnectedness of these issues and the need for a comprehensive approach to achieve true gender equality and uplift marginalized communities, with a particular focus on addressing nutrition and socio-economic disparities.

Digitalisation

Participants highlighted how digital advancements have fostered a more citizen engagement by facilitating access to information, enabling direct communication with representatives, and facilitating participation in political activities online. This has empowered citizens by offering avenues to be more informed and involved in governance. The emergence of new avenues for political engagement was highlighted, such as online activism, crowdfunding, and social media campaigns. These methods could allow broader participation beyond traditional forms like voting or volunteering, enabling diverse voices to contribute to political discourse.

It was discussed how the rise of digital media has revolutionized how citizens consume news, providing political actors with novel opportunities to reach and influence voters. However, the discussion also underscored the challenges associated with misinformation proliferation and the creation of echo chambers, which pose risks to informed decision-making. Also, Governments' increasing reliance on data for policymaking and targeting voters was deliberated upon. While data utilization offers insights for informed decisions and program effectiveness, concerns about privacy infringement and surveillance practices were identified as critical issues needing regulation. Furthermore, the discussion addressed the pressing need for governments to fortify cybersecurity measures. Cyber threats, especially during elections, were highlighted as potential vulnerabilities requiring stringent protective strategies to ensure the integrity of democratic processes and governmental systems.

Key Takeaways

- Innovation, such as artificial intelligence, impacts not only society but also the political sphere and can be explored as a tool but also poses ethical and misinformation threats, that need to be addressed.
- Gender and Youth participation and sustainability are topics that are prevalent in Indian and German society and require political, as well as structural solutions with particular attention to the grassroot level. Germany and India each have innovative practices of dealing with the above topics and can inspire each other.
- By fostering an environment of collaboration and learning, the conclave empowered emerging leaders to envision a more interconnected, inclusive, and progressive future.

Conclusion

The conclave for Young Leaders in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand, orchestrated by KAS India, served as a dynamic platform for diverse, politically involved young leaders. It successfully facilitated meaningful dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collaboration across a spectrum of topics, transcending the boundaries of politics, such as innovation, sustainability, gender and youth participation. Through a balanced program combining formal sessions, networking opportunities, and leisure activities, the conclave fostered an enriching environment where emerging leaders could collaborate, share insights, and envision a more interconnected and inclusive future. The event underscored the importance of nurturing collaborative leadership and empowering the next generation of change-makers to drive positive societal transformation.