

CONSULTANCY OPPORTUNITY — COUNTRY RESEARCH CONSULTANT

Project: Information Manipulation Targeting Germany Abroad — Safeguarding Germany's Economic Interests

Role	Country Research Consultant - Brazil / India / South Africa	Reports to	Project Lead
Contract type	Consultancy / freelance contract	Duration	ASAP until 30 June 2027
Volume	Average of six to nine days per month (depending on day rate)	Location	Remote - based in or with deep knowledge of th Brazilian / Indian / South African context
Daily rate	To be agreed based on experience	Languages	Professional English required; Portuguese / Hindi or Tamil or Bengali + regional / English + Afrikaans essential

ABOUT ISD

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) is an independent, non-profit think-and-do tank dedicated to safeguarding human rights, democracy, and security in the face of rising extremism, hate, polarisation, and information manipulation. For more than 20 years, ISD has been at the forefront of analysing, exposing, and countering these threats, helping governments, institutions, communities, and the private sector build the tools, strategies, and capabilities they need.

ISD's work combines cutting-edge digital analysis, policy expertise, and operational programmes. Our teams in Berlin, London, Washington DC, Amman, and Toronto span more than 150 researchers, analysts, policy specialists, and practitioners.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

ISD Germany has launched a 14-month research project funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, running until 30 June 2027. The project investigates information manipulation circulating in Brazil, India, and South Africa that targets Germany's economic interests.

The core concern is that distorted narratives about Germany - as an economy, employer, trading partner, and destination for skilled migration - can damage skilled-labour recruitment, trust in German companies, and broader economic cooperation, even when formal economic indicators have not yet registered any impact. Despite Germany's increased efforts to monitor information manipulation domestically, there is currently no systematic mechanism examining how such narratives circulate abroad and affect German economic interests. This project closes that gap.

The project uses a mixed-methods research design that combines qualitative digital ethnography with representative online surveys, structured across five phases:

- Scoping and Phase 1 digital ethnography (**months 1–2**): mapping platforms, key actors, and emerging narratives on the two most relevant platforms per country (Facebook/TikTok in South Africa, Instagram/Facebook in India, YouTube/Instagram in Brazil)
- Phase 2 longitudinal monitoring (**months 3–5**): tracking salient narratives over time, applying narrative salience and relative traction as analytical lenses to work around platform data limitations
- Survey design and fieldwork (**months 6–9**): translating qualitative findings into representative online surveys (~1,000 respondents per country) measuring exposure, perceived credibility, and effects on migration intentions, trust in German firms, and economic perceptions
- Analysis and reporting (**months 10–11**): producing a Monitoring Report and an Impact Assessment triangulating qualitative and quantitative findings
- Stakeholder roundtable, finalisation, and dissemination (**months 12–14**): validating findings with German ministries, business associations, and economic stakeholders, then publishing and disseminating outputs

THE ROLE

ISD Germany is seeking a Country Research Consultant for Brazil / India / South Africa to provide expert country-level support across the full project cycle. The consultant will work closely with the ISD Germany project team and counterpart consultants in the other two countries, contributing both deep contextual expertise and hands-on analytical capacity.

The consultant is expected to work for an average of six to nine days per month (depending on the day rate), distributed across the project phases. The consultancy starts as soon as possible and runs until 30 June 2027.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Digital ethnography and narrative analysis (Phases 1 and 2)

- Identify and map actors, communities and channels involved in producing or amplifying information manipulation about Germany in Brazil / India / South Africa on the two priority platforms including influential accounts, media outlets, influencers, and diaspora

actors propagating distorted or misleading narratives relevant to Germany's economic interests

- Conduct systematic qualitative observation and longitudinal monitoring of public content on those platforms across the country-specific monitoring period
- Code and analyse content using ISD's established frameworks for information manipulation and influence operations, with attention to themes including economic stability, migration, labour market conditions, safety, and treatment of foreign workers
- Apply narrative salience and relative traction analyses to assess the prominence and potential influence of identified narratives
- Produce a country-specific narrative brief synthesising findings, key actors, and salient narratives

Survey design and analysis (Phases 3 and 4)

- Assist in translating the country-specific narrative mapping into substantive inputs for the survey, including identifying the most salient narratives and framings to be tested with respondents in Brazil / India / South Africa

Integration, reporting, and stakeholder engagement (Phase 5)

- Contribute country-specific content to the Monitoring Report and the Impact Assessment
- Participate in cross-country synthesis discussions and contribute to comparative analytical framing

Project management and collaboration

- Participate in regular project team meetings (weekly or bi-weekly during active research phases) and contribute to cross-country synthesis calls
- Adhere to ISD's research ethics, safeguarding, and data protection protocols, including those for researcher wellbeing when handling potentially distressing content
- Maintain clear documentation of research activities and findings

PERSON SPECIFICATION

We are looking for a consultant who combines methodological rigour in qualitative online research with deep, current contextual knowledge of Brazil / India / South Africa. The criteria below describe the profile we are seeking.

	Essential	Desirable
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial experience researching online information environments, disinformation, influence operations, or related fields, with a focus on Brazil / India / South Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous engagement with multi-country, mixed-methods research designs • Working relationships with local survey providers, civil society organisations, or

	Essential	Desirable
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrable experience conducting digital ethnography or qualitative monitoring of social media platforms (in particular [Facebook/TikTok Instagram/Facebook YouTube/Instagram]) • Track record of producing rigorous, policy-relevant written analysis for international or government audiences • Strong familiarity with the political, economic, media, and platform ecosystem of Brazil / India / South Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • platform researchers in Brazil / India / South Africa • Experience advising or briefing government, business, or multilateral stakeholders • Familiarity with the FIMI (Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference) analytical framework or comparable frameworks (e.g., DISARM, EEAS STRATCOM)
Knowledge & qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postgraduate degree in social sciences, communications, political science, area studies, or a related field or equivalent professional experience • Strong understanding of the information manipulation, disinformation, and influence operations landscape in Brazil / India / South Africa and globally • Awareness of methodological and ethical considerations in online research, including researcher safety and data protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published work on disinformation, influence operations, platform governance, or related topics in or about Brazil / India / South Africa • Knowledge of Germany's economic and foreign policy relationship with Brazil / India / South Africa
Skills & languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Native or near-native command of Portuguese / Hindi or Tamil or Bengali + regional / English + Afrikaans essential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • German language skills (not required, but useful for funder-facing exchanges) • Experience working with qualitative analysis software

	Essential	Desirable
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional working proficiency in English (project working language). • Excellent written analytical skills; ability to produce concise, policy-ready outputs • Strong organisational skills and ability to deliver to deadlines across a 14-month project cycle • Ability to work independently and as part of a distributed, cross-country team 	(e.g., MaxQDA, NVivo) or social media monitoring tools
Personal qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong analytical judgement and intellectual rigour • Cultural sensitivity and ability to navigate politically contested research topics with care • Commitment to ethical research practice and to ISD's values • Resilience and self-awareness when working with potentially distressing content over extended periods 	

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

ISD is committed to building a diverse and inclusive team. We particularly welcome expressions of interest from individuals who are currently underrepresented in our networks, including consultants from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. If you have specific access needs or adjustments you would like us to consider during the selection process, please let us know.

HOW TO EXPRESS INTEREST

Interested consultants are invited to share the following with the ISD Germany project team at germany@isdglobal.org:

- A current CV or short profile (max 3 pages)
- A short cover note (max 1 page) outlining relevant experience, country expertise, and availability
- One or two examples of relevant prior work (links or attachments)

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a 40-minute conversation with members of the ISD Germany project team.