

## **India - Expanding Ties with the West**

### **What is the issue?**

The summit of Group of Seven (G7) industrial countries is an opportunity for India to expand ties with the West.

### **Is the West on decline?**

- Since the global financial crisis of 2008, the West is perceived to be in a terminal decline.
- Various factors have only added to this view:
  - the rapid rise of China
  - deepening divisions within the West during the Trump years
  - the chaotic response in North America and Europe to the Covid-19 pandemic
- But the US president Joe Biden wants to reverse the global perception of a declining West.
- Biden also calls for the normalisation of relations with Russia, suggesting a fresh look at the ties.

### **What does it mean for India?**

- Biden is determined to strengthen US alliances and draw India into a new global architecture.
- The other factors generating convergence between the interests of India and the West includes -
  - i. the challenges from an increasingly aggressive China
  - ii. the urgency of mitigating climate change
  - iii. the construction of a post-pandemic international order
- Biden also made an elevation of the Quad (US, Australia, India and Japan) to the summit level recently.
- It is much about defining a new agenda for a particular geography, the Indo-Pacific, of which India is a part.

### **What about India's role in G7?**

- This is not the first time that India is participating in the G-7.
- It is also not new to have G-7 leaders invite different countries to join them.

- But the difference this time is the conception behind UK PM Boris Johnson's invitation.
- UK , as the host, has invited leaders of India, Australia, South Africa and South Korea to the summit.
- This suggests the intention to build a coalition of leading democracies, based more broadly than the geographic West.
- India is at the very heart of this Western calculus of having a global democratic coalition.
- [India has been having strong bilateral strategic cooperation with the US, France, UK and the Quad.
- There is also the trilateral partnerships with France and Australia as well as Japan and Australia.
- India has also stepped up its engagement with the European Union.]

### **How significant is the West to India?**

- China is trying to internationalise the Kashmir issue after the 2019 constitutional changes.
- And India has relied on Western support to fend off this effort of China.
- [The West is also supportive to India's aim to contain Pakistan's support for cross-border terrorism.]
- There is also a growing trade imbalance with China, leading to India walking away from the RCEP.
- In all, India is reluctant to integrate with the China-led Asian economic order.
- Importantly, it is also turning to the West - the US, UK, EU and others - for trade agreements.
- In essence, China is the greatest obstacle to India's global aspirations and the West is an emerging partner.

### **How about ties with Russia?**

- Moscow has moved closer to Beijing in recent years.
- But India has been reluctant to abandon its longstanding ties with Russia.
- However, a deteriorating US-Russia relationship in recent years was a challenge to India.
- But, the renewed dialogue between Washington and Moscow has increased India's hopes now, to strengthen ties with Russia.

### **What are the challenges though?**

- Between India and the West, there are many areas of continuing divergence.
- These range from the economic role of the state to the democratic regulation

of social media and the technology giants.

- So, translating the broad convergences between India and the West into tangible cooperation require sustained negotiations.
- A productive partnership with the West helps India's national interests and adds strength to India's international relations.

**Source: The Indian Express**

