

## India and G7 Summit: RSTV – India's World

### Context:

- The focus of this discussion is on the key takeaways for India from the G7 summit that was held at Biarritz, France.
- Some of the important issues that were looked at during the summit were – climate change, India's membership to the NSG, global trade, taxation mechanism for technology companies, etc.
- The G7 countries also looked into India's decision to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370, an issue that Pakistan has been trying to internationalize.
- But India stuck to its position that J&K is purely an internal matter to India and there is no need for any external intervention.
- But US President Donald Trump insisted on the need for dialogue between India and Pakistan during his interaction with PM Modi. He ruled out the need for any third-party mediation and put his trust on India to handle the delicate situation.
- In another major development, the UN Secretary-General said that he understood India's need to be a part of the NSG and that he would be willing to pitch for India's membership.

### Big Takeaways for India:

- For India, getting invited to be a part of the G7 summit, even though it is not a member of the grouping, came as a special gesture from the host country France, which is keen on furthering strategic ties with India.
- This invite came at an opportune time for India as it gave the Prime Minister the right platform to engage with the top leaders and present India's viewpoint on the Kashmir issue, especially since Pakistan has launched a smear campaign against India at all major global platforms.
- All the G7 members were supportive of India's stand and there was no reference to the Kashmir situation in the joint statement. This can be seen as a diplomatic victory for India and an endorsement of its position, considering that the G7 joint statement did make a reference to the ongoing political turmoil in Hong Kong.
- It was an anti-climax for Pakistan at the G7 because its all-weather ally – China, which is not a part of the grouping, was not there to push for its case just as it did at the UNSC.
- Even the European countries, which are otherwise hawkish on the Kashmir issue, chose not to bring up the Kashmir issue and in fact, close partners like France have openly embraced India's stand.
- This shows that the European powers see India as a major trading and investment partner and they respect India's sensitivities, which was tactfully conveyed by the Prime Minister.
- The opportunity given to PM Modi to speak on digital transformation, technology and environment sustainability is an indication that India is being seen as a major player in these domains.

### India's strategy to deal with the fall-out of the decision on Article 370:

- At the G7, India's approach was to convince the global leaders that Kashmir is an internal issue and the current clampdown on constitutional rights is only a temporary measure to curb violence and any acts of extremism.
- Now the game plan would be to release the detained political leaders and lift the curfews and communication blackout before the PM heads for the UNGA summit in September.
- Then the PM can assure the global community that elections would be held soon in J&K and even the Supreme Court is likely to pronounce a verdict soon on the constitutionality of the decision.
- Thus, India would try and fulfil the obligations of a constitutional democracy in order to assuage any global concerns and defeat Pakistan's strategy of internationalizing the issue.
- Plus over the last decade or so, Pakistan has been increasingly seen by the global community as the source of instability and as an economic basket case, and this changed global outlook strengthens

India's position.

- Even China for that matter seems to have extended only rhetorical support to Pakistan at forums such as the UN, but bilaterally it hasn't pushed hard at India. China's public statements have expressed more concern about the status of Ladakh than on Kashmir. This shows a difference of opinion between China and Pakistan and indicates that China wouldn't want to unnecessarily ruffle any feathers with India.
- India on its part has assured China that status-quo will be maintained with regard to the Indo-China border dispute and the bifurcation of the state is just a case of internal reorganisation having no bearing on China's interests.

### **Pakistan's efforts to stoke international opinion:**

- Pakistan has tried many tricks to bring international focus to the Kashmir issue. Apart from pushing the issue at the UNSC, OIC, etc., it has also sponsored so-called protests in London and other major capitals by using sympathizers of the Khalistan movement who are funded by the ISI.
- But these efforts have failed to gain any traction in the western countries. That being said, India should be aware that foreign powers may have recognised Kashmir as an internal issue but they will keep a close watch on the human rights situation and will prod India if the situation deteriorates.
- So India needs to restore normalcy as soon as possible and lift the communication blackout and curfews which have snatched away the constitutional rights of the people of an entire state.

### **Is the world seeing India as a leader on climate issues?**

- Major western powers and the global south see India as a leader in climate initiatives. Especially France which has positioned itself as the lead country for clean energy and global warming initiatives sees India as a natural partner.
- This has been very evident since the Paris climate change summit of 2015, when both the countries launched the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- The ISA has already emerged as the largest global initiative on environmental issues, since the Rio Earth Summit of the 1990s and these efforts of India outside of the UN framework has won it global admiration.
- At the G7 the Prime Minister spoke about how India is getting closer to achieving its targets under the Paris Agreement through clean energy projects which are causing a paradigm shift in India's energy basket. India's thrust towards shifting from fossil fuels to clean and renewable forms of energy has attracted global attention.
- India is being seen as a country which can provide solutions to deal with the impact of climate change and for mitigating carbon emissions.
- The small island nations and least developed countries (LDC's) which have formed a grouping known as the 'Vulnerable 20' (Climate Vulnerable Forum) are looking up to India for providing leadership and solutions to deal with the disproportionate impact that climate change is having on these vulnerable countries.
- In 2017, at the G-20 summit, India proposed a **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and it is likely to be launched in September 2019 at the United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York, when the Prime Minister takes part in the annual UNGA session.**
- The proposed coalition plans to bring together the rich and the poor countries together to create a fund which would support the creation of disaster-resilient infrastructure in the light of increasing extreme events and disasters which are an outcome of global warming and climate change.
- Moreover, India is no longer seen as just a seeker of finance from the developed countries for climate action. It has begun to come up with innovative funding solutions by pooling in the resources of like-minded countries.
- India has taken major strides towards being a part of the solution that just being a part of the problem. India has shown that it doesn't want to take the path taken by China towards achieving economic prosperity. China's growth is largely based on large-scale manufacturing that is powered

by dirty fuels whereas India is trying to shift away from fossil fuels without comprising its growth ambitions.

- Prime Minister's campaign against single-use plastics and a proposed new climate change commitment which will go beyond India's commitments to the Paris agreement has positioned India as a leader in the field of climate action and sustainable development.

### **India's bid for NSG:**

- India has been eager to join the NSG in order to further its civil nuclear program and after having joined the other export control regimes such as – MTCR, Australia Group and Wassenaar Arrangement – it has redoubled its efforts to become a part of the NSG.
- But India's ambitions are being curtailed by the roadblock that China has set up. It has made the signing of the NPT a pre-condition if India has to be admitted into the NSG and it has successfully blocked India's entry despite India enjoying the support of all the other major powers.
- Joining the NSG is crucial for India if it has to source the raw materials needed to power its civil nuclear program and export its nuclear technology and reactors to other countries.
- Since there is no question of India signing the NPT due to its discriminatory nature, we need to ensure that China doesn't continue to hold the NSG and India's ambitions to ransom for the sake of its power politics.

### **Conclusion:**

- India will have to capitalise on the fact that unlike Pakistan, China is not an irresponsible player. India should draw an example out of the successful listing of Masood Azhar by the UNSC sanctions committee and how it managed to win over China's support.
- India should build on the success of the Wuhan informal summit and build confidence with China on all contentious matters including the border dispute and its pending membership to the NSG.
- Diplomacy is a complex interplay of regional and global factors. So India needs to put its best foot forward with China and hope for the best.
- Finally, one key takeaway from the G7 is the growing strategic closeness between India and France.
- Traditionally, within the P-5 it was always the Soviet Union/Russia which was seen as India's closest ally. But over the years, France has entered the same bracket with its unflinching support on all issues of concern to India.
- In fact, Russia has off late started to veer away a little from India on certain issues due to its geo-political dynamics with China and the USA. But France, on the other hand, has been unwavering in its support of India and its core interests.
- Today, the India-France relationship has become all-encompassing and it spans from cooperation in critical defence technologies such as submarines, fighter jets, aircraft carriers, etc. to environment initiatives and alignment of strategies in the Indo-Pacific region.
- This is clearly a relationship that has to be nurtured further by both the countries in order to maximise its potential.

