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## India's Membership of G-7: A Potential Game Changer

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## Background

The 'Group of Seven or popularly known as the 'G-7,' is an exclusive club of the world's rich and affluent nations which has the mandate to represent their larger interests and the worldview from their perspective. India first participated as an invitee to the G-7 summit, which was initially called the 'G-8 with Russia also being a part thereof. However, Russia ceased to be the member post the Crimean annexation in 2014. Hence, the G-8 became the G-7.

The present-day fabric of the G-7 seems to be gaining prominence especially due to the fact that, with relations between Russia and the USA getting strained, the UN Security Council seems to be gradually losing its effectiveness.

## Impact of Indian Foreign Policy on India's rising international sway

India's rising influence as a special invitee to the G-7 summit consecutively on a number of times can be seen resting on the cardinal values and the philosophy that the Indian foreign policy is treasured with. Indian foreign policy can draw parallels with an elephant where every other person (read country) tries to touch and feel different parts thereof to draw one's own inference and to understand its implications for their respective national interests. Conceptually, India's foreign policy rests on the cardinal ideologies of non-alignment, strategic autonomy and promotion of serene concomitance among the countries of the world.

India maintains friendly strategic alliances with almost every country in general. This goes a long way towards making its presence felt at nearly every important international event and indirectly contributes to enhancing its worldwide sway. Some key aspects of India's foreign policy that support this thought process broadly include:

### *Primacy Towards Neighbours*

India always gives first and foremost priority to its neighbours and strives to maintain global tranquillity and the stability of power equations in the region. The proactive Vaccine diplomacy practised by India for nations around the world amidst recent Covid-19 pandemic constitutes the biggest example of this thought process.

### *Uniting the World for a Common Cause*

India has been actively involving the nations of the world to formulate and execute the strategy against common issues like the environment, climate change, poor medical conditions and

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infrastructure in some of the less privileged nations with a natural leadership posture having a benevolent protector's disposition.

### *Multilateral Groupings*

India is seen getting actively involved in the business conducted by the multilateral organisations e.g. the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, BIMSTEC, the G-7, the G-20, and the BRICS etc just to name a few with singular strategic aim; i.e. to make an active contribution to global governance and address global challenges.

### *Countering Terrorism*

India is closely coordinating with friendly transnational allies to draft the anti-terror doctrines and getting into action to jointly combat terrorism.

### *Mutually Win-Win Economic Diplomacy*

India is actively practising a vigorous economic diplomacy based on a mutually win-win approach. This is highly effective in so far as it has the capability to attract a larger chunk of inward investments by enhancing the international trade ties and creating infrastructure, thereby moving in the direction of achieving better economic progression among all the participating nations.

### *Strategic Partnerships*

India is actively involved in entering into a number of strategic partnerships with many of the countries based on collective interests and common paybacks. It has entered into multidimensional strategic partnerships with some developed countries e.g. The USA, Russia, Japan, France, Australia and a few others, while the less privileged nations are looking up to India to get into agreements so as to further their respective national aspirations.

### *Powerful Track-II Diplomacy*

India has recently been found to be focusing upon the Track II diplomatic approach more than ever before through its rich cultural heritage and soft power initiatives like International Yoga Day and international promotion of Indian cinema, besides promoting Indian cuisine, literature and art, to enhance its worldwide sway.

### *Utilising Air Power for Defensive as well as Humanitarian Causes*

India has the powerful air power capability which is manifest in the special role played by the Indian Air Force and civil air agencies for the military as well as peaceful humanitarian purposes. The recent evacuation of Indians as well as nationals of some other countries stranded in the trouble torn Ukraine, Sudan and Afghanistan etc by successfully utilising its transport fleet, has demonstrated India's noble attitude of 'Care for All' disposition, regardless of any ideological dissonance that India may be having against any nation whatsoever. This humanitarian face of India has gone a long way in generating a greater respect for India worldwide.

### **India's Membership of G-7 as a Force Enhancer for India's Strategic Aspirations**

Having analysed some of the contributing foreign policy factors that help strengthening India's diplomatic standing in the world, we need to respond to the candid question as to whether India's membership in the G-7 can possibly help in furtherance of India's strategic aspirations. An analysis of some of the undermentioned factors may help us draw plausible deductions to this effect:

#### *Economic Prospects*

The G-7 as a group comprises of some of the world's strongest economies and key business associates having tremendous business potential. India's inclusion in this body might give it a much desired entry into a forum where economic issues and trade policies are deliberated upon potentially culminating into increased trade opportunities and investment inflows.

#### *Global Impact*

The G-7 membership might heighten India's global silhouette and enhance its impact on significant global issues. It would provide an effective platform to India enabling it to voice its stance and priorities on important issues like climate change, global governance and undoubtedly security against terrorism.

#### *International Networking and Conglomerates*

Being a part of the G-7 may also offer India a chance to have direct interactions with the leaders of some of the most prominent countries in the world. This networking associated with a personalised touch in the diplomacy, which India has been recently practising, can foster better and more meaningful bilateral relationships and strategic partnerships on various fronts.

### *Foreign Policy Alignment*

The G-7 deliberations also centre around critical global issues like climate change, security and health and so on. India's G-7 membership might enable it to align its policies with those of other G-7 member nations thereby directly and indirectly contributing to the global initiatives in perfect sync with the efforts to address common concerns.

### *Support for Development*

India's membership of the G-7 might open avenues for increased assistance for the development of infrastructure and better access to the transfer of technology. This would benefit India in terms of realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals for India's economic and social development.

### **Future prospects**

It's worth noting that G-7 membership for India entails a thorough process and requires unanimity among the member countries. While India has till now participated in G-7 summits as an invitee, the formal membership is yet to be institutionalised. Nevertheless, an active engagement with the G-7 and other multilateral forums remains strategically imperative for India so as to help it pursue its strategic interests at the global level.

As mentioned above, India has been a special invitee to the G-7 Summit consecutively for the fifth time. By virtue of being one of the major democracies of the world and defence spending wise the third in the world, it acquires special suitability to obtain the permanent membership of G-7. This is also worth mentioning here that the guest appearance of India at the G-7 on so many occasions in a series also hints at India ostensibly being on the right diplomatic course besides having been placed predominantly amidst extant international power equations.

India has successfully staged an elderly disposition in the international political sphere through various initiatives like Vaccine Maitri in face of the pandemic or as a saviour of the nationals not only of India but also of other countries as well. India stood by the true spirit of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* when citizens of many nations were recently stuck in trouble-torn countries like Afghanistan, Ukraine or Sudan, or coming forward with HADR to the needy nations. All this collectively makes India's global position strong enough to be able to wield the desired influence at the international level.

The ongoing Indian technological advancements in diverse fields, defence preparedness and progress in the aviation industry, engineering, medical science and India willingness to share with

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the nations that need its assistance, besides addressing the other tenets of soft power definitely accord India an edge over any big country that might have traditionally been placing itself as a world leader or super power hitherto.

Considering all the above, it would be in the larger interest of India to aim at obtaining the permanent membership of G-7 besides retaining its traditional edge on other international platforms like the G-20, ASEAN, SCO, BRICS, BIMSTEC and many others. India certainly enjoys good prospects of succeeding in impacting the world order, utilising its forward looking diplomacy and the international clamour that it enjoys.

In fact, the inclusion of India as a member of the G-7 has bright prospects for making the G-7 more representative of the global economic order. India being a G-7 member stands in a better position to potentially impact the world order also by virtue of being the world's one of the most populous country with a rapidly growing economy. India's economic robustness and its rapid progress would positively contribute to shaping the global economic order. Additionally, India's geopolitical appeal and its active role in addressing the global challenges are expected to significantly impact the world order.

