

MOVE OVER G7, IT'S TIME FOR A NEW AND IMPROVED G11

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US President Donald Trump is keen to expand G7 to include India, Russia, South Korea and Australia. He has invited PM Narendra Modi to attend the G7 meeting in the US later this year. Mint explores the reasons behind Trump's moves and whether India should play ball.

What prompted US to call for an expansion?

The G7, formed in 1975-76, comprises the US, Canada, the UK, France, Germany, Japan, and Italy. Not all of these countries are among the most advanced now. India is both a military and economic giant but isn't part of the G7. So, its expansion, just like that of the United Nations Security Council, is called for. However, there is more than that to Trump's moves. China has emerged as the new nemesis for the US and many other countries, particularly after the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan. Having India and others in the G7 is Trump's way of countering the rising influence of China on the world stage.

What could be the other reasons?

The US goes to polls in November to elect its next president and Trump faces a tough fight against the Democratic candidate Joe Biden. The US and China have been fighting a trade war for quite a long time. Both have imposed tariffs on imports of a long list of goods from the other. Mentioning 'Wuhan virus' to provoke China and upping the rhetoric against it, along with inviting four other countries to G7, help Trump sell the promise of 'Make America Great Again' well to his audience. Trump hasn't had the best of relations with few members of G7. Expanding the group helps him accommodate friendly countries.

Does the Indian diaspora in the US matter?

It does. The Democratic Party is pro-immigration that goes well with Indians based there. However, the party has also been critical of India's record on minority rights, which doesn't go well with most Indians. The Republican Party, particularly under Trump, is anti-immigration but the President has often acknowledged Indians' contribution to the US.

Why has Trump chosen the four countries?

If there's any country in Asia that comes anywhere close to China in population, economic and military numbers, it is India. South Korea is a tech and economic superpower and US is committed to defending it against any enemy. Australia is a natural ally for the US in the South Pacific, a region where China has been expanding its influence. That leaves Russia, a force to reckon with any day, given its military superiority. Trump has also usually got along with Putin, its unpredictable leader. Russia also shares a large border with China.

Should India play along as US takes on China?

India has had a complex relationship with China. China's past record—it fought a war with India

in 1962— makes it difficult for India to trust it. China and India are in a standoff in Ladakh. India and the US are natural allies. One is the world's largest democracy and the other the oldest. There is an urgent need for democracies and rules-based regimes that believe in fair trade and respect for intellectual property rights to come together. It may be time for India to play hardball with China.

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