

SEVEN TO ELEVEN: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON INDIA AND G-7

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: G8

Dismissing the current configuration of the “Group of Seven” or G-7 of the world’s most developed nations as “outdated”, U.S. President Donald Trump announced over the weekend that he [would like to expand it to a G-11](#), by adding India, Russia, South Korea and Australia. He [followed that up with invitations](#) to their leaders, including Prime Minister Modi, to attend the G-7 summit in the U.S. later this year. The news was welcomed by Mr. Modi, who commended Mr. Trump for his “creative and far-sighted” decision to expand the format of the grouping to keep up with the new realities of the “post-COVID world”. Australia and South Korea have also welcomed the invitation, while Russia, that [lost its membership of the grouping in 2014](#) over its annexation of Crimea, said President Putin would attend “if treated as an equal”. Notable by its absence in the proposed grouping is China, which had earlier, along with India, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa, been invited regularly to G-8 summits as an outreach by the developed world to the five emerging economies (called the G-8+5). U.S.-China tensions, particularly over [coronavirus](#) issues, clearly played a part in Mr. Trump’s decision to leave Chinese President Xi Jinping off his summit guest list. A White House spokesperson even explained that the G-11 would be a way for the U.S. to bring together its “traditional allies to talk about how to deal with the future of China”. Predictably, Beijing has lashed out at the G-11 idea, as one that would be “doomed to fail”.

The proposed G-11 grouping would recognise India’s place amongst the world’s richest nations, and acknowledge its global voice. However, the government must weigh the benefits proposed along with some of the factors that are still unclear. As host, Mr. Trump can invite any country as a G-7 special invitee, but changing its composition will require the approval of the other members. Already, there are some concerns over Russia, which could derail the entire G-11 plan, making any concrete decision by New Delhi on the issue premature. It is unclear when the summit will actually be held, given the November polls in the U.S., although Mr. Trump has indicated that he could hold it close to the UN General Assembly session in September. Despite its border tensions with Beijing, India must also consider its objectives in attending a grouping that appears aimed at fuelling a new Cold War between the U.S. and China. Finally, an evaluation of the G-7’s effectiveness as a multilateral forum thus far is needed, given deep member differences on issues including climate change, security contributions, Iran, etc. In France, last year, the grouping was unable to issue a joint communiqué due to these differences — a first in its 45-year-old history.

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