

G7, Guest Countries and Communique on Open Societies

June 18, 2021

India signed off on the 'open societies' joint statement by the G7 and guest countries, which encourages values such as "freedom of expression, both online and offline, as a freedom that safeguards democracy and helps people live free from fear and oppression", but the language was revised to accommodate New Delhi's concerns about a blanket criticism of Internet shutdowns.

In news: G7 accommodates Indian stand on Internet curbs

Placing it in syllabus: Foreign Affairs

Dimensions

- Important Decisions of the Meeting
- India's Concerns and Changes Made
- G7
- G20

Content:

Important Decisions of the Meeting:

- leaders from the G7 group of seven industrialised nations – the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Canada and Japan – met at a luxury seaside resort in Cornwall, UK.
- Their implicit message is that they stand as a bulwark of democracies against geopolitical and economic competition from China and Russia.
- The '**Open Societies Statement**' was adopted at the end of an outreach session of G7 titled '**Building Back Together–Open Societies and Economies**'.
- Apart from the G7 countries, India, South Korea,

Australia and South Africa were invited as guest countries. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson called them **“Democracies 11”**

- The much-awaited G7 communique covered the three Cs: Covid-19, climate and China.
- For good measure, it also provides important clues into the thinking of G7 countries on issues such as trade, democracy, human rights, multilateralism and post-Covid-19 global economic recovery.

The parties agreed to commit to cooperate together and with partners to:

- **Strengthen open societies globally** by protecting civic space and media freedom, promoting freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, and freedom of religion or belief, and by tackling all forms of discrimination, including racism;
- **Continue to exchange information** and coordinate effective responses to shared threats to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, such as disinformation and arbitrary detention, including through relevant partnerships such as the Rapid Response Mechanism, as appropriate;
- **Promote economic openness and resilience and oppose economic coercion** by reasserting our shared economic model, which is founded on open markets, fair competition, and the rule of law, and by reforming the World Trade Organization;
- **Prevent and tackle corruption and illicit financial flows** and promote integrity, transparency and accountability;
- **Promote respect for internationally accepted norms** that drive inclusivity and protect digital civic-space, including through capacity building, and ensure that the design and application of new technologies reflect our shared values, respect human rights and international

law, promote diversity and embed principles of public safety;

- **Prioritise gender equality, women's empowerment** and the full enjoyment of human rights for women and girls in the global recovery, as well as disability inclusion and equal opportunities for young people in education and employment;
- **Collaborate on science-based responses to global challenges** and drive innovation by calling on every nation to increase their research transparency and integrity;
- **Reinforce our commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals**, including SDG 16 to 'Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies', and to support developing country achievement of the 2030 Agenda, including by taking concrete actions to address key financing for development challenges.

Another G7 statement – which was not signed by India or the other guest countries – criticised China for violating “human rights and fundamental freedoms” in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, and also its “unilateral attempts” to change the status quo in the South China Sea.

The statement also called for a transparent and timely study by the World Health Organisation into the origins of the novel coronavirus in China.

India's Concerns and Changes Made:

- An earlier statement issued by the G7 foreign ministers in May – in the section titled 'Open Societies, unequivocally condemned Internet shutdowns, which they said is a violation of freedom of expression.
- India pushed to dilute the language related to Internet shutdowns, saying shutdowns are sometimes necessary for maintaining 'law and order' and combating communal violence.

- Participating via a video conference, Prime Minister Modi said that “democracy and freedom were a part of India’s civilisational ethos”.
- However, he “shared the concern” expressed by several leaders that “open societies are particularly vulnerable to disinformation and cyber-attacks”.
- He said there is a need to ensure that cyberspace remains “an avenue for advancing democratic values and not of subverting it”.
- He also underscored the “vulnerabilities” inherent in open societies and called on tech companies and social media platforms to “ensure a safe cyber environment for their users.”
- The UK had moved to agree to a compromise on the language in the summit document, to refer to only shutdowns that are “politically motivated”.
- Later, the language of the document was revised to accommodate New Delhi’s concerns about a blanket criticism of Internet shutdowns.
- In the statement that India signed, concern is expressed only against “politically motivated internet shutdowns”.

G7:

- It is an **inter-governmental political forum** consisting of seven industrialised nations of the world
- Its members are the world’s largest IMF-advanced economies and wealthiest liberal democracies
- The group is officially organized around shared values of pluralism and representative government.

Origin, Evolution, Composition

- The G7 or Group of Seven was set up in 1975 as an informal forum.
- It brought together the leaders of the world’s leading industrial nations.
- It was established to tackle the oil crisis of 1973

created by the OPEC oil embargo.

- The member states are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- The EU is not a member but is usually invited to the summits.
- The member countries represent 40% of the global GDP and 10% of the world's population.
- From 1998 to 2014, Russia was also a part of the group and was collectively known as G8. In 2014, Russia carried out armed aggression on Ukraine and ceded the Crimean Peninsula from it.
- post the **Crimean crisis**, Russia was expelled from the group and the group was renamed G7

Achievements

- Since 1975, the group has met annually at summits organized and hosted by whichever nation occupies the annually-rotating presidency
- It is considered to be the second most important grouping after the UNSC which can effectively deal with global issues.
- In recent years, G7 leaders have met to formulate common responses to challenges encompassing counterterrorism, development, education, health, human rights, and climate change.
- In response to mounting concern over money laundering, the **Financial Action Task Force** was established by the G-7 group in Paris in 1989.
- In 1997, the G7 countries agreed to provide \$300 million in order to contain the effects of the reactor meltdown in Chernobyl.
- In 2002, members decided to launch a **coordinated response to fight the threat of AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria**. This led to the formation of the Global Fund, an innovative financing mechanism that has disbursed more than \$45 billion in aid.

- In 2015, members launched the **Global Apollo Program**. It was designed to tackle climate change through clean energy research and development.
- The programme calls for developed nations to commit to spending 0.02% of their GDP on tackling climate change from 2015 to 2025. This would mean spending \$150 billion over a 10-year period.

Drawbacks

Outdated Group:

- The group no longer reflects the modern-day geopolitical realities.
- Many incumbent members like Italy and Canada possess less economic and political power in comparison to nonmembers like India and China.
- Emerging 7 (E7) economies of India, China, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, Turkey are not part of it.

Disregards the interest of smaller nations:

- Several countries and individuals still perceive the G7 as an exclusive, closed group that blatantly exercises its power over other nations.
- The collective power of the group is so huge that it creates a disproportionate impact on other nations.

Non-Binding and Informal nature:

- Unlike other bodies such as NATO, the G7 has no legal existence or a permanent secretariat. Further, the meeting commitments are non-binding in nature.
- All decisions and commitments made at G7 meetings need to be ratified independently by governing bodies of member states.

Lack of Unanimity:

- The G7 has for a long time lacked the unanimity and

leadership to tackle its many problems, particularly cutting carbon emissions and Greece's unpayable debts

- It does not have, and has not had since 2010, a common view about how to go about achieving any of its aims.

Ineffective handling of Global issues:

- G7 failed in tackling global issues and challenges of Climate change, terrorism(ISIS etc), West Asian crisis, COVID 19 pandemic.
- G7 accounts for 59% of historical CO2 emissions and pledged to phase out fossil fuels. Yet there is no visible progress of the same and they currently account for twice the CO2 emission than African continent.
- In terms of terrorism, ISIS has thousands of fighters from G7 countries.
- The West Asian crisis in Syria, Yemen, Iraq has led to a migrant exodus to European nations. G7 nations failed in addressing this migrant crisis leading to deaths and inhumane statelessness for millions.
- Weakening of rules based of trade regime through WTO and trade wars has active role of G7 countries

Suggestions or Reforms needed:

- The grouping needs expansion to reflect the current geopolitical reality. It can be converted to G 11 with the inclusion of India, Australia, South Korea, and Russia.
- It must embrace multilateralism which promotes mechanisms which address global problems. These mechanisms need to be representative and must include current and emerging economies.
- The G7 countries should expeditiously fulfill their commitment to supply one billion doses of Covid vaccines to poor and middle-income countries.
- The grouping requires a G7 charter and a permanent secretariat for the organisation. It must realise that

global interdependence cannot be managed without global public goods.

G20:

Origin , Evolution and Composition:

- The G20 (or Group of Twenty) is an intergovernmental forum comprising **19 countries and the European Union (EU)**.
- It works to address major issues related to the global economy, such as international financial stability, climate change mitigation, and sustainable development.
- The G20 is composed of most of the world's largest economies, including both industrialized and developing nations.
- The group collectively accounts for around 90 percent of gross world product (GWP), 75-80 percent of international trade, two-thirds of the world's population, and roughly half the world's land area.
- The G20 was founded in 1999 in response to several world economic crises.
- The Group of 20 deals with many broad themes.
- While economic and financial issues tend to lead the agenda, other areas have gained momentum.
- Traditional topics include the global economy, financial markets, fiscal affairs, trade, agriculture, employment, energy and the fight against corruption.
- Other recent additions include participation of women in the labor market, sustainable development, global health, fight against terrorism and inclusive ventures, among others.

G20 an alternative to G7?

- The Group of Seven (G7) and the Group of Twenty (G20) are informal governance clubs
- The G7 is a more homogenous, intimate group, which has

been meeting for decades.

- G20 on the other hand is more diverse and represents the emerging multipolar world order.
- Emerging powers including Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa, whose absence from the G7 was often noted, including Russia, all belong to the G20.
- The agendas of the two clubs overlap, with the G7 generally engaging in more political and security-related issues than the G20, which primarily focuses on global economic and finance governance.
- The G20 is large and unwieldy. While there may be logic to the G20 as an economic/financial grouping, the political case is less compelling. Aside from wishing for a greater role in global governance, it's unclear what BRICS have in common.
- The last decade witnessed the advent of major cybercrimes and rising national security threats from technology as key issues. China and Russia are seen as malign forces on these fronts in the US and Europe, undermining G20 co-operation.
- G20 is also known as the "Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy".

Mould your thought: What role G7 has to play in contemporary world geopolitics? Highlight the issues with the group and discuss whether G20 is an alternative for it.

Approach to the answer:

- Introduction
- Discuss the Origin and evolution of G7
- Discuss G7 role with respect to the 3 Cs: Covid, Climate and China
- Mention the shortcomings of the group
- Give reasons for G20 being a replacement or not
- Conclusion