



Navigating the India-West Diplomatic Nexus

This editorial is based on "[A chance to reboot relations with the West](#)" which was published in The Indian Express on 12/06/2024. The article brings into picture the complexities of India's diplomatic engagements, including managing conflicts with China and cooperation with Russia while expanding ties with the West amidst global geopolitical challenges.

For Prelims: Locations Related to [Russia-Ukraine conflict](#), [G7](#), [Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries](#), [European Union](#), [Tiger Triumph 2024](#), [US-China Technological Decoupling](#), [Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity](#), [UN Security Council](#), [S-400 missile defense system](#), [Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act](#).

For Mains: Friction Points Between India and West, Significance of Enhanced Ties with West.

India's diplomatic landscape is increasingly becoming complex, with the nation needing to manage its [conflicts with China](#) and **cooperation with Russia** while simultaneously **expanding ties with the West**. This balancing act is particularly challenging amid the escalating [Russia-Ukraine conflict](#) and growing military tensions between China and its neighbors in the **Western Pacific**.

As a frequent participant in G7 gatherings, India has a vested interest in deepening collaboration with the "**collective West**." With the West also keen on drawing India into global governance structures, the upcoming [G7 summit \(Italy as host\)](#), presents a prime opportunity for India to reboot its ties with the Western nations.

What is G-7?

- **About:** The G7 is an informal bloc of industrialized democracies, the **United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom (UK)**, that meets annually to discuss issues such as global economic governance, international security, and, most recently, artificial intelligence (AI).
- **History:** The United States, France, Italy, Japan, the UK, and West Germany formed the Group of Six in 1975 to provide a venue for noncommunist powers to address pressing economic concerns, which included **inflation and a recession** sparked by the [Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries \(OPEC\)](#) oil embargo.
 - **Canada** joined in 1976.
 - The [European Union \(EU\)](#) has participated fully in the G7 since 1981 as a "**non enumerated**" member.
 - Russia belonged to the forum from **1998** through 2014, when the bloc was known as the **Group of Eight (G8)**, but the country was suspended following its annexation of **Ukraine's Crimea region**.
- **Secretariat:** The G7 **does not have a formal charter or a secretariat**.

- The presidency, which rotates among member countries each year, is in charge of setting the agenda.
- The **50th G7 Summit** is set to be held from **13th June to 15th June 2024** in the city of Fasano in **Apulia, Italy (India is invited)**.

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What Constitutes the West in Geopolitical Context?

- **Geographic Scope:** Traditionally, the West referred to **Western Europe** and the areas it colonized, primarily **North America and Australasia**.
 - Debate exists regarding Eastern Europe's inclusion, with some considering it part of the former Soviet sphere of influence.
 - However, the definition is not so clear-cut anymore. The growing interconnectedness of the world challenges the clear-cut distinction between "West" and "East."
- **Cultural Features:**
 - **Greco-Roman Legacy:** Western culture draws heavily on the philosophical and political traditions of ancient Greece and Rome, emphasizing **reason, logic, and individual rights**.
 - **Christianity:** While religious practices have become more diverse, Christianity, particularly **Catholicism and Protestantism**, has significantly shaped Western values and institutions.
- **Political and Economic Systems:**
 - **Democracy:** The concept of representative government with individual freedoms and liberties is a cornerstone of Western political systems.
 - **Capitalism:** Free-market economies with private ownership and competition define most Western economies.
 - **Rule of Law:** The West emphasizes a legal system based on established laws and procedures, ensuring fairness and accountability.

Why Does India Need to Reboot Its Relations with the West?

- **Managing the China Challenge:** China's rising assertiveness in the [Indo-Pacific](#) and its border tensions with India pose a significant challenge.
 - The **West**, particularly the **U.S.**, views **China as a strategic competitor**.
 - Improved India-West relations would allow for better coordination in managing the multi-faceted China challenge through economic, diplomatic, and military means.
 - **India and the US** have recently conducted joint military exercise [Tiger Triumph 2024](#), demonstrating a willingness to collaborate on security issues.
- **Balancing Relations Alongside Russia:** India's historical ties with Russia, including defense cooperation, have been a point of **friction with the West**, especially in the wake of the **Ukraine conflict** where **India significantly increased its imports of [Russian crude oil](#)** despite Western sanctions.
 - Rebooting relations would help India better explain its stance while finding **common ground** on issues like **energy security and regional stability**.
- **Managing the [US-China Technological Decoupling](#):** The intensifying **US-China tech wars** and the bifurcation of technologies like **AI, and 5G** pose a significant challenge for India.
 - Remaining non-aligned in this realm could hamper India's technological aspirations and economic growth.
 - A reboot would enable India to seek a balanced approach, **accessing US and Western technologies** while leveraging its market size to **negotiate favorable terms** and safeguard its strategic autonomy.
- **Reshaping the Global Trade Architecture:** With the WTO's challenges and the rise of plurilateral arrangements like [Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity](#), the global trade order is undergoing a seismic shift.
 - As the West aims to create a rules-based framework aligned with its interests, India must proactively engage to ensure its concerns around issues like [data localization](#), **e-commerce, and digital taxation** are addressed.
 - A reboot could position India as a pivotal player in reshaping trade rules for the digital era.
- **Navigating the Geopolitics of Climate Change and Energy Transition:** Climate change is becoming an arena of strategic competition, with the West pushing for an accelerated transition towards renewable energy, and the **potential weaponization of technologies** like [green hydrogen](#) and [carbon capture](#).
 - India's energy security imperatives and its leadership in initiatives like the [International Solar Alliance \(alongside France\)](#) make it a crucial partner.
 - A revamped partnership could facilitate climate finance, technology transfers, and a balanced approach to energy transition.
- **Collaborating on Regional Connectivity:** India's vision for an integrated regional connectivity framework, whether through initiatives like [India-Middle East-Europe Corridor](#) requires Western cooperation for financing, capacity-building, and aligning with the broader rules-based order.

What are the Friction Points Between India and West?

- **Differences on Global Governance and Reforms:** India has long sought reforms in global governance institutions like the [UN Security Council](#) and the [World Bank](#) to reflect the changing power dynamics.
 - However, parts of the **West have been reluctant to support reforms** that would dilute its influence in these bodies, creating friction with India's aspirations for a greater global role.
- **Intellectual Property Rights and Technology Transfers:** India's stance on intellectual property rights (IPR) and its efforts to produce **affordable [generic drugs](#)** have often led to tensions with Western pharmaceutical companies and governments.
 - The West has also been cautious about **transferring sensitive technologies to India** due to concerns over potential diversion or leakage.
- **Strategic Autonomy vs. Alignment Expectations:** India's pursuit of **strategic autonomy**, rooted in its non-aligned legacy, often clashes with Western expectations of closer alignment on issues like Russia-Ukraine War.
 - The West perceives India's **multi-alignment approach** as a reluctance to take sides, while India sees it as a pragmatic foreign policy of **all-alignment** that preserves its leverage and **negotiating power**.
- **Divergent Approaches to Regional Security:** India's approach to regional security issues,

particularly in its neighborhood, has sometimes diverged from Western perspectives.

- For instance, **India's reluctance to intervene in Myanmar's political crisis** or its **cautious stance on the Taliban's takeover** of Afghanistan has created friction with Western policies and expectations.
- **The Khalistan Issue:** The resurgence of the [Khalistan movement](#), fueled by some elements within the Indian diaspora in Western countries like **Canada and the UK** has become a significant source of friction.
 - India has accused these nations of providing a **platform for anti-India activities and harboring pro-Khalistan elements**, straining bilateral relations.
- **Defense Cooperation and Arms Exports:** India's defense cooperation with Russia and its procurement of Russian weapons systems like the [S-400 missile defense system](#) have been a source of friction with the West, particularly the United States.
 - The West, especially the **United States**, has expressed concerns over this issue. Although India was granted a waiver under [CAATSA \(Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act\)](#), recently concerns have been resurfaced. .

How Can India and the West Reconcile Their Differences?

- **Establish a Plurilateral Tech Alliance:** India and the West could explore establishing a plurilateral technology alliance focused on **developing and setting standards** for critical and emerging technologies like AI, quantum computing, and cyber security.
 - This alliance could facilitate **joint research, knowledge sharing, and the co-development** of niche technologies while ensuring a level playing field and safeguarding the participants' strategic interests.
- **Create a Renewable Energy and Climate Innovation Fund:** To address the friction over climate change and energy transition, India and the West could jointly create a **dedicated fund to finance and accelerate research, development, and deployment of clean energy solutions**.
 - This fund could support projects in areas like **green hydrogen, carbon capture, sustainable aviation fuels**, and climate-resilient infrastructure, fostering collaboration and mitigating concerns over technology transfers and climate finance.
- **Joint Framework for Responsible Space Exploration:** As space exploration and commercialization accelerate, India and the West could develop a **joint framework for responsible space exploration** and governance.
 - This framework could address issues like the sustainable utilization of space resources, the **prevention of space debris**, and the peaceful use of space, fostering cooperation while respecting each partner's strategic interests.
- **Focus on Regional Trade Agreements:** While finalizing a **pan-India-EU FTA** might be challenging, India can explore smaller regional trade agreements with specific countries like the recent [TEPA with European Free Trade Association](#).
 - This allows for faster progress and caters to diverse economic interests.
- **Issue-Based Alignment:** India needs to develop an **"issue-based alignment" framework** for certain domains that allows for cooperation on areas of mutual concern while respecting India's independent stance on other matters.
 - Establishing dialogue mechanisms to address misperceptions and concerns about **India's strategic autonomy, ensuring transparency and open communication**.

Drishti Mains Question:

Evaluate the challenges and opportunities for India in aligning its interests with those of the West, taking into account recent geopolitical developments and strategic imperatives.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs):

Q. Recently, India signed a deal known as 'Action Plan for Prioritisation and Implementation of Cooperation Areas in the Nuclear Field' with which of the following countries? (2019)

(a) Japan

(b) Russia

(c) The United Kingdom

(d) The United States of America

Ans: (b)

Q.Among the following Presidents of India, who was also the Secretary General of Non-Aligned Movement for some period? (2009)

(a) Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

(b) Varahagiri Venkatagiri

(c) Giani Zail Singh

(d) Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma

Ans: (c)

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/navigating-the-india-west-diplomatic-nexus>

