

What was on the agenda of the recent Group of Seven meet in Italy? How many times has India been invited? As a key player in the Global South, is its voice heard? What are some of the criticisms against the grouping?

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PM Narendra Modi in a group picture with G-7 leaders and other participants during the outreach session of 50th G-7 Summit, in Apulia. File | Photo Credit: ANI

The story so far: Leaders of the Group of Seven, the U.S., Canada, Germany, France, Japan, the U.K. and Italy, met in Italy's Apulia region from June 13-15, along with the European Union leadership, for a summit to discuss a host of issues. India has been invited to the outreach 11 times, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi attending it for the fifth time.

What was the G-7 summit hoping to achieve?

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funds of Russia, held a special “Energy for Growth in Africa” summit to spur investments in clean energy, attacked China for coercive trade practices, and met with leaders of 10 countries, including India, and multilateral organisations, as part of the “G-7 Outreach”, to discuss the concerns of the Global South. Apart from substantive issues, the G-7 grouping has also been trying to battle its own image, as a tired set of countries representing the old world of the ‘western elite’.

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It was also widely commented upon that apart from Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, whose party did well in this month’s European Parliament elections, all other G-7 leaders are battling tough election campaigns with sagging approval ratings.

How important is India to the G-7 process?

India has been an important part of the G-7 process for several years now, coming to the grouping’s attention in the 2000s for its steady growth figures during the global financial collapse. India is not only a key member of the Global South, and has hosted the “Voice of Global South” conference since 2023, it is also a member of the G-20 troika, along with Brazil and South Africa. Besides, Prime Minister Modi is a central figure at such outreaches, though India is not a member of the G-7.

Other countries whose leaders attended the outreach were Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Jordan, Kenya, Mauritania, Tunisia, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates, along with heads of the African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations and the World Bank.

Is it an important platform for India?

For India, the outreach session of the G-7 meeting, that follows a day after the main G-7 deliberations, has always been an important platform to showcase its achievements and

democratic world”, and the importance of harnessing technology and artificial intelligence to bridge global inequality, as well as a roadmap to fight climate change. He said it was important to pay heed to the Global South’s concerns, as it bears “the brunt of global uncertainties and tension”, a reference to how the developing world looks at unilateral sanctions as well as food, fertilizer and energy security. Mr. Modi spent most of his time in bilateral meetings and held talks with U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Japan Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Ms. Meloni. He also met with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who was a special invitee, and after the photo-op with all the leaders, he spent a few minutes with U.S. President Biden.

He released a less cordial photo of his exchange with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, reflecting the poor state of bilateral ties, but the G-7 outreach gave him the opportunity to meet global leaders and set priorities for his new term in office.

What is the future of G-7?

The G-7 is increasingly under attack for being an elitist, non-inclusive group, that doesn’t include three of the world’s top 10 economies, China, India and Brazil, or representation from the rest of the world, like the G-20 does, for example. In addition, the G-7, which has not increased its membership (in fact, it decreased it, by dropping Russia in 2014), is increasingly being challenged by a grouping like BRICS, that has now doubled its size from the original Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa grouping to include other countries and energy majors like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iran, as well as Egypt and Ethiopia. That the G-7 has been unable to change the course of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, or stop Israel’s devastating bombardment of Gaza, or deterred China from its inroads into global connectivity and infrastructure and economic influence, is raising more questions about its relevance.

It remains to be seen how the G-7, which may have a different composition of leaders, given impending elections in the U.K. and the U.S., stands up to the challenge to re-invent