

Modi In Europe

India must capitalise on the ongoing shifts in the global order

Embarking on his latest foreign tour, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is visiting Germany, Spain, Russia and France over the next few days. The tour comes at a time when the global order is undergoing fundamental shifts. Populist sentiment is surging in Western countries, triggering dramatic political change. This includes Europe, currently dealing with the aftermath of Brexit and a new US administration that wants EU member nations to shoulder greater responsibilities for their defence. In fact, German Chancellor Angela Merkel recently said that Europe could no longer completely depend on others – a reference to the US and UK – and needed to fight for its own destiny.



Such a reordering of Europe and the world presents opportunities as well as threats for India. For example, Brexit opens up the possibility of a mutually beneficial India-UK free trade deal that wouldn't have happened under the aegis of the old EU. Similarly, Brexit indirectly puts pressure on EU to get

its own long-delayed trade agreement with India up and running.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart President Vladimir Putin have a good chance of working out a US-Russia modus vivendi. This would be beneficial for India and Modi must attempt to nudge both powers in this direction. That said, it would also be welcome if the US continues to provide leadership in areas such as climate change. Trump refused to commit to the 2015 Paris climate accord at the recent G7 summit and may decide to pull America out. American leadership receding here would only see China fill the vacuum – not a very appealing proposition given that climate change must be taken seriously and China mostly works against India at international fora. In short, Indian diplomacy needs to be extremely agile in a world that is being unmade and remade again.