GS-II: In search of the Wuhan spirit.

News

The second informal summit between the leaders of India and China is scheduled to take place in the second week of October.

Wuhan summit

- At the Wuhan Summit last year, a decision was made to hold more such summits, aimed at ensuring “higher levels of strategic communications.”
- China agreed to an informal summit in 2018 despite so many achievements and it actually did not need to make concessions to India.

Choice of Mamallapuram:

- Wuhan was picked by President Xi Jinping as the venue last year to demonstrate China’s economic resilience and might.
- Mamallapuram is symbolic of India’s ‘soft power’. It is an important town of the Pallava dynasty that ruled this part of south India from 275 CE to 897 CE, is renowned for its architecture, widely admired across the world.
- Mamallapuram and the Pallava dynasty are also historically relevant. The earliest recorded security pact between China and India involved a Pallava king from whom the Chinese sought help to counter Tibet, which had by then emerged as a strong power posing a threat to China.

Post Wuhan:

- Since then, China has met with certain setbacks geo-politically and economically.
- India is beset by a host of economic woes and now seems better positioned today than in 2018.
- Doklam and the disputed border between the two countries remains an issue of concern.
- Hopes raised at the Wuhan Summit that the two countries would jointly work together on an economic project in Afghanistan did not work. China, along with countries like Pakistan, remains more intent on ensuring that India has no role to play there.
- Relations between China and the U.S. have sharply deteriorated. A vast majority of nations in the West have cooled off towards China.
- A further strengthening of India-Russia ties, as also a new triangular relationship of Russia, India and Japan, appear to be altering equations in the East Asian region.

Contradictory outlook of the two countries:

- China and India continue to compete and have a contradictory outlook on many strategic and civilisational issues.
- These include the nature of Asian security, regional stability and the role of the U.S. in the region.
- The China-Pakistan axis has been further cemented.

China’s domestic scene:
The economy is far more fragile than in early 2018. Internal security concerns such as unrest in Tibet, inroads made by radical extremist groups in Xinjiang and the latest turn of events in Hong Kong are also reinforcing fears. The relentless attack by the U.S. on China’s economic practices has only aggravated the problem.

**Way Forward:**

India must ensure that it does not provoke China to the point where it would be inclined to indulge in ‘adventurism’.

“Subduing the enemy without fighting” has been a recurrent theme in Chinese thinking, and while informal summits have their uses, it is imperative not to overlook this aspect.

China’s efforts are likely to be directed towards ‘disruption’, concentrating on disrupting the strategic alliances that India has forged.