

# Heading the G-20 and New Delhi's choices

Writer - Rajiv Bhatia (Former Ambassador)

The article is related to  
General Studies-Paper-II  
(International Relations)

The Hindu

25 August, 2022

**With geopolitical currents redefining geo-economics, India needs to be ready to emerge as the chief global diplomat.**

The clock is ticking. In about three months, India will assume for the first time the Group of 20 (G20) year-long presidency from December 1, 2022 to November 30, 2023, culminating with the G20 Summit in India in 2023. The subsequent months will witness India hosting over 200 meetings with hundreds of ministers, officials, diplomats, businessmen, non-governmental organisations, working groups, and engagement groups of the G20 composed of 19 powerful economies and the European Union (EU).

India has hosted large international conferences such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in 1983 and the Third India-Africa Forum summit in 2015. But nothing compares with hosting the G20. It is the world's informal steering directorate on global economic issues; it entails the responsibility of shaping decision-making on key challenges facing the world today; and its summit is preceded by a large quantum of preparatory deliberations that feed into the final outcome.

## **Importance, complexities**

It is essential to neither overstress nor underestimate the significance of the G20's work. The G20 membership represents nearly 90% of the world's GDP, 80% of global trade, and 67% of the planet's population. It is an advisory body, not a treaty-based forum and, therefore, its decisions are recommendations to its own members.

The weight of this powerful membership carries enormous political and economic influence. The representation of the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization, and other multilateral institutions in it makes the G20 an incomparable body.

The G20 has played a vital role in addressing financial and economic challenges such as the global financial crisis of 2008-09 and the Eurozone crisis of 2010. The forum was elevated from the finance ministers to the heads of government/state in 2008. This was the era of the G8 (up to 2014

when Russia was suspended), of the major powers — the United States, the EU, Russia, and also China, but they needed to work together with the emerging economies in defining global challenges and crafting their solutions.

However, in this second decade of the G20, the forum is faced with an existential crisis, where the major powers have fallen out. It makes the task of the presidency country much more complicated, as the current president (Indonesia) is discovering.

The disastrous impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic, the war in Ukraine, India-China border tensions, EU/U.S.-Russia hostility, and deteriorating U.S.-China relations are already visible in the run-up to the 2022 Bali summit (in November) where all G20 leaders may not be sitting physically in the same room. The outcome in Bali will affect the Delhi summit. Indian officials are thus carefully planning their strategy as the burden and the prestige of the presidency are bestowed on India. They know well that the currents of geopolitics are redefining the contours of geo-economics today. Their mission will be not only to save the G20 but also the future of multilateral cooperation in diverse domains of the grouping's multi-dimensional agenda.

### **India's choices**

Guided by the triple motivation of promoting India's national interest, leaving its mark on the G20, and maintaining its primacy as an effective instrument of global governance, there are four different ideas have emerged in New Delhi.

First, the G20 presidency offers a unique branding opportunity for India's recent achievements, including the ability to combat COVID-19 effectively at home and abroad through vaccine aid and diplomacy. Other major achievements are India's digital revolution, its steady progress in switching to renewables, meeting its targets to counter climate change, and its push for self-reliance in manufacturing and reshaping global value chains. New trends in entrepreneurship, business innovation, the rise of many start-ups as unicorns, and gender progress too need to be showcased. A single-year presidency does not empower the host to change the world, but India can provide evidence of its domestic successes, tested at the continental scale, for global adoption. It can also be utilised to transform India's sub-optimal physical infrastructure to create an attractive investment and tourism destination, especially as several important G20 meetings will be hosted outside Delhi.

Second, by a remarkable coincidence, four democracies on the path to becoming powerful economic players — Indonesia, India, Brazil, and South Africa — hold the presidency from December 2021 to November 2025. This offers a rare opportunity for synergy and solidarity to advance the interests of the developing world and to assert their combined leadership of the Global South.

Third, another exceptional coincidence is that all three members of IBSA — India, Brazil, and South Africa — will hold the G20 presidency consecutively in 2023, 2024, and 2025. This forum, insulated from the geopolitical pressures constraining the BRICS (where these three countries are required to work with Russia and China), can develop a cohesive plan to project the priority concerns

of the Global South. IBSA needs an urgent rejuvenation by convening an informal meeting of its top leaders, perhaps on the sidelines of the Bali summit.

Four, India needs to get ready to emerge as the chief global diplomat. As the G20 president, India will be obliged to take a broader view of the G20 agenda to synthesise divergent interests of all constituents of the forum: five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the developed world united under the flag of the G7, five members of BRICS, and other G20 members such as Argentina and Mexico. More importantly, as the president and host, India should factor in the perspectives of countries not represented in the G20. India will advocate an inclusive approach, with pragmatic and human-centric solutions to global issues. An important aim should be to end Africa's marginalisation by elevating the African Union (AU) from permanent observer to a full-fledged member of the G20, thus placing it on a par with the EU.

### **A parting thought**

These four choices are not mutually exclusive. It is possible to weld them together to create a holistic and comprehensive approach for the Indian presidency of the G20. The challenge is to combine an India-focused view, promote the vital interests of the Global South, and demonstrate diplomatic acumen to communicate with and reconcile the viewpoints of rival and adversarial power centres such as the West, Russia, and China. India today is in the enviable position to deliver this unique package. It must rise to the occasion.

**Committed To Excellence**

### Expected Question (Prelims Exams)

**Q. Consider the following statements –**

1. Members of the G-20 represent approximately 90% of the world's GDP and 80% of global trade.
2. The G-20 group has a permanent secretariat or headquarters.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 2 only
- (b) 1 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1, nor 2

**Ans. (b)**

### Expected Question (Mains Exams)

**Q . While highlighting the objectives and role of G-20, discuss how G-20 is important for India? (250 Words)**

World

Committed To Excellence

**Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC main examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.**