



## G-20 and Need for Multilateralism

**Prelims:** G-20 Presidency, De-globalization, Covid-19, Mini lateral Groupings.

**Mains:** G-20 and Need for Multilateralism.

### Why in News?

India's [G-20 Presidency](#) places multilateral reform as one of its top presidential priorities as India stated that its agenda would be **inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented, and decisive**.

- India also said that its primary objectives are to build **global consensus over critical development** and security issues and deliver global goods.

### What is the Need for Multilateralism?

- Due to persistent deadlocks, multilateralism has **lost the majority's trust**. Multilateralism is facing a **utility crisis**, where powerful member-states think it is **no longer useful** for them.
- Moreover, increasing **great-power tensions, de-globalisation, populist nationalism**, the pandemic, and climate emergencies added to the hardships.
- This impasse led states to seek other arenas, including bilateral, plurilateral and Mini lateral groupings, which subsequently contributed to further polarization of global politics.
- However, cooperation and multilateral reform is the need of the hour. Most of the challenges nations face today are **global in nature and require global solutions**.
- Pressing global issues such as conflicts, [climate change](#), [migration](#), macroeconomic instability, and [cybersecurity](#) **can indeed only be solved collectively**.
- Furthermore, disruptions such as the [Covid-19 pandemic](#) have **reversed the social and economic progress that global society made in the past** couple of decades.

### What are the Roadblocks to the Reforms?

- **Global Power Politics:**
  - Multilateralism is deeply entrenched in global power politics. As a result, any action in reforming multilateral institutions and frameworks automatically transforms into a move that seeks changes in the current distribution of power.
  - Modifications in the distribution of power in the global **order are neither easy nor normal**. Moreover, it may have **adverse implications if not done cautiously**.
- **Considers a Zero-Sum Game:**
  - The status quo powers see multilateral reforms as a zero-sum game. For instance, in the context of the Bretton Woods system, the U.S. and Europe believed **reform would reduce their influence and dominance**.
  - This makes decisions about reform in these institutions, by consensus or voting, hard.
- **Multiplex Global Order:**
  - Multilateralism **appears at odds with the realities** of the emerging multiplex global order.

- The emerging order seems **more multipolar and multi-centred**.
- Such a situation facilitates the formation of **new clubs, concerts and coalitions of the like-minded**, which makes the **reform of older institutions and frameworks more challenging**.

## How can G-20 and India Promote Multilateralism?

- **Constitution of Engagement Group:**
  - Currently, the multilateralism reform narrative **lives only in elite circles and some national capitals**, particularly the emerging powers.
  - Therefore, the G-20 should first focus on **setting proper narratives of multilateral reform**.
  - G-20 may constitute an engagement group **dedicated to bringing the narrative to the forefront of global discourse**.
  - India should also urge the upcoming chairs of the grouping, **Brazil and South Africa, to place multilateral reforms as their presidential priorities**. Since both have global high-table ambitions, it would be an easier task for India.
- **Encouraging Minilateral Groupings:**
  - While supporting multilateral cooperation, G-20 should continue **encouraging minilateral groupings as a new form of multilateralism**.
  - Creating networks of issue-based minilateralism, particularly in areas related to the **governance of the global commons** will be helpful in preventing competitive coalitions where other actors play the same game to their advantage, leading to a more fragmented world order.
- **Being More Inclusive:**
  - The group needs to be more inclusive without sacrificing efficiency. For example, **including the African Union as a permanent member** and the UN Secretary-General and General Assembly President as permanent invitees would be **helpful to enhance its legitimacy**.
  - Similarly, to address the crisis of trust and utility, G-20 should put all its efforts into solving one or two pressing global issues and showcase it as the model of new multilateralism.
    - Food, fuel and fertilizer security can be one such issue. On the one hand, it falls under the 'low politics of world politics, so cooperation is more achievable.

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

**Q. In which one of the following groups are all the four countries members of G20? (2020)**

- (a)** Argentina, Mexico, South Africa and Turkey
- (b)** Australia, Canada, Malaysia and New Zealand
- (c)** Brazil, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam
- (d)** Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and South Korea

**Ans: (a)**

**Source: TH**