



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