

India Takes Over Presidency of G 20: Faces Tough Task of Steering Nations into Consensus

Raagini Shekher Sharma

(RIEAS Senior Analyst)

**Copyright: @ 2022 Research Institute for European and American Studies (www.rieas.gr)
Publication date: 11 December 2022**

Note: The article reflects the opinion of the author and not necessarily the views of the Research Institute for European and American Studies (RIEAS).

The Relevance

The *Group of Twenty (G20)* was formed in 1999 in the wake of the economic meltdown in South East Asia that shook the economy of the world with a view to unite the world's largest established and emerging economies and ensure global financial and economic stability. The aim was to create a global ecosystem that would support equitable growth and development. The most powerful economies in the world, both developed and emerging, were brought together for this common cause. In the third summit in 2009 held in Pittsburgh, the leaders designated the G20 as the "*premier forum for international economic cooperation.*"

At present, G20 members represent almost 85% of the global GDP and 75% of the global trade. The relevance of G20 has grown over the years, however, it has a tough task ahead to bring the world economies together and frame new and modified international financial architecture that should be capable to withstand the present fissures in geo-political and geo-economic landscapes and the likely turmoil's that would creep up in the future.

The Group of Twenty (G20) comprises Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, U.K., U.S.A. and the European Union.

The Curtain Raiser

INDIA assumes G20 Presidency on December 03, 2022, representing the last of the troika of emerging countries which have been heading G20 for the preceding two years and this year too.

Previously, Brazil and Indonesia and now India heads the G20. It is a moment of pride and glory for India and with this also comes the added responsibility and accountability for a year to weather the storms and sail through the rough times. In its run-up to assuming the Presidency, India organised a curtain-raiser event in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands for more than 40 diplomats and officials from member countries, the UN and other multilateral organisations. The reasons to select the islands in the Bay of Bengal were first, to showcase the freedom struggle of India as the freedom fighters were imprisoned here in the Cellular jail; second, the islands are 90 nautical miles apart from Indonesia, from whom baton has been taken over of the presidency of G20 and lastly the positive and salubrious climate of the islands sending the positive vibes.

Challenges for India

On one hand, the world is though recovering from the aftermath of the Pandemic, its outbreak and spread in different variants and intensities in future cannot be predicted. On the other hand, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and ongoing war for the last ten months have badly hit the economy all across the continents and politically the nations are more divided than before. We are in the midst of geo-political and geo-economic transitions taking place with no predictability creating more friction between the States over the issues, seemingly with no resolution in sight. Uncertainties loom large on the security and economic landscape. Hence, the conception of multilateralism decision-making hangs in a balance.

It is apt to state that the presidency to India has come at an inflection point wherein the tensions between USA and China have soared over the Indo-Pacific region and several other issues; war in Ukraine has put the West against Russia once again and the transnational issues like climate change, post-pandemic health challenges, an economic slump and the rising friction and dissidence over technological governance and privacy of the people. For all of these issues, member nations and international institutions have to cooperate in finding viable answers.

How India as the President G20, is going to steer this transformative phase for the maximum good for the maximum nations is challenging and yet to be seen. India's handling of pandemic and post-pandemic situations in the country and helping hand in provisioning of aid in the form of vaccines, medical apparatus and medical staff to other countries has put it on the global canvas as a country with the wherewithal, strong will and technology as also a big heart. The autonomous stand taken by India on the Russian invasion of Ukraine has raised eyebrows in the EU and countries of the Western hemisphere yet it has sent a signal of the strategic autonomy that India has. India's strategy of inclusiveness and multilateral diplomacy will be put to the test.

The manner the Bali Declaration was handled by PM Modi with the Ukraine issue raising its ugly head and how he worked with Indonesia to find a language consensus on the issue. In one stroke, he ensured that the resolution was not a new and sharp attack on Russia and simultaneously it voiced the opinion and flagged the sentiments of the West on the Ukraine war. The necessary thaw in the Declaration has paved the way ahead for India in the implementation of its strategy.

India's Strategy

India has chosen an apt theme of *“One Earth, One Family, One Future,”* for the period of its G20 Presidency based on the centuries-old Indian tradition of *“Vasudhaiva Kutumba-Kam,”* (in the Sanskrit language) i.e. the world is one family. India's vision of carefully choosing the theme implies its commitment as also a message to all that the world is not divided into 'first world or third world' or 'North or Global South' or 'West or East', rather, it is one world. The theme enshrines India's efforts to unite the entire world in pursuit of a common goal and a better future.

India's priorities for G20 are being firmed up, meanwhile, it has stated clearly its intention that all efforts will revolve around inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth. It will hold about 200 meetings across the country culminating into the G20 Leader's Summit at the level of Heads of State Government scheduled in September next year.

A *G20 Secretariat* has already been formed with Mr Harsh V. Shingle appointed as India's Chief Coordinator who will be responsible for the implementation of overall policy decisions. The Secretariat will coordinate and execute tasks related to logistics, preparations of meetings, deciding venues, technical and security-related issues as also handling media aspects and facilitating arrangements for G20 delegates.

The working of G20 is done on twin tracks, namely, *Sherpa Track* and the *Finance Track*. The nominated Sherpa (Sherpas are a clan in Nepal who are the scouts for the mountaineers) lead the Sherpa track negotiating over the course of the year whereas the finance ministers and the central bank governors lead the finance track.

Under the Sherpa Track, there are 12 work-streams, these are - anti-corruption, agriculture, culture, development, digital economy, employment, environment, and climate, education, energy transition, health, trade and investment, and tourism. There are two initiatives by the Sherpa Group, *G20 Empower*, this initiative aims to empower women and accelerate their leadership in the private sector by leveraging alliances between business leaders and G20 countries and *RIIG (Research and Innovation Initiative Gathering)*, this initiative aims to enhance and strengthen research and

innovation collaboration among the member countries. Mr Amitabh Kant is designated as India's Sherpa, under whom will fall the onus of all works related with the Sherpa Track.

Under the Finance Track, there are 8 work-streams, these are - global macroeconomic policies, infrastructure financing, international financial architecture, sustainable finance, financial inclusion, health finance, international taxation, and financial sector reforms.

There are *Engagement Groups* that bring together civil societies, think tanks, women, youth, researchers, and businesses. Under the Engagement Groups, there are 10 groups that include Business 20, Civil 20, Labour 20, Parliament 20, Science 20, Supreme Audit Institutions 20, Think 20, Urban 20, Women 20 and Youth 20.

While I pen down this article, the first G20 meeting of the Sherpas and the nominated delegates of the member nations and heads of invited international organisations has just concluded in Udaipur, Rajasthan (04 - 07 December 2022). The very first meeting is crucial as it sets the tone and tenor of India's efforts being the G20 President. In the briefings, the structure of India's G20 Presidency and various working and engagement groups were explained. It was re-iterated by the Indian Sherpa that in spite of the global challenges, India would advocate oneness for all and find solutions collectively. India being a voice of the Global South was also emphasised. A side event was conducted that focussed on the agenda: "Transforming Lives at the Midpoint of the 2030 Agenda: Accelerating Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in an Era of Cascading and Multiple Crisis".

Concluding Remarks

India picks up the G20 Presidency in challenging and tough circumstances and how it sets the stage to push the developed and emerging economies to shed their differences and prioritise to find collective solutions to major issues such as economic stability, climate change, the pursuit of SDG's 2030 goals, energy and health security, food, fertilisers and fuel security.

Getting the different nations to a middle ground is going to be a humongous and arduous task. However, India's current reputation as a country having strategic autonomy and a legacy of providing a helping hand during pandemic times will facilitate it's finding a collective consensus of member nations on issues of grave importance. *India during its G20 Presidency is likely to overcome geo-political and geo-economic challenges, present and future, and steer the nations to find viable solutions to core issues of economic stability and world amity. Important is to wait and watch, how much has it succeeded after a year.*