

MAINS iMPACT 202527-11-2025G20SYLLABUS:

GS 2 > International relations > Strategic Groupings > International groupings

REFERENCE NEWS:

- The 20th G20 Leaders' Summit took place in Johannesburg on **22–23 November 2025**, marking the **first G20 Summit on African soil**.
- The declaration is notable because it was **finalised without US participation**, as the Trump administration boycotted the summit and objected to mentions of "climate change".
- Despite this, leaders adopted a comprehensive declaration centred on **Africa, climate action, debt sustainability, food security, digital governance, and UNSC reform**.

KEY OUTCOMES OF THE 2025 G20 SUMMIT**Africa-Centric Global Leadership**

- First-ever G20 Summit hosted in Africa; elevated **Ubuntu philosophy** as guiding principle for global cooperation.
- Strong emphasis on **African priorities**: representation, development finance, energy access, food security, and digital inclusion.

Major IMF Governance Reform

- Creation of a **25th IMF Executive Board seat dedicated to Sub-Saharan Africa**.
- Political push toward aligning IMF quotas with **real economic weights**, enhancing developing-country voice.
- Affirmation of over **USD 100 billion voluntary channelling of SDRs** to PRGT and RST.

Strong Commitment on Global Debt Sustainability

- Reaffirmed strengthening the **G20 Common Framework** for timely and predictable debt restructuring.
- Endorsed **debt-for-climate** and **debt-for-development swaps**.
- Called for improved **debt transparency**, public financial management, and domestic resource mobilisation.

High-Ambition Climate Action Despite U.S. Boycott

- Full commitment to implementing the **Paris Agreement**.
- Adoption of **Voluntary High-Level Principles for Investing in DRR**.
- Push to scale global climate finance from "**billions to trillions**", recognising **USD 5.8–5.9 trillion** climate finance needs by 2030.
- Support for universal coverage of **early warning systems**.

Just Energy Transitions & Mission 300

- Highlighted massive African energy poverty:
 - 600+ million without electricity
 - 1 billion without clean cooking
- Endorsed global targets to:
 - **Triple renewable energy capacity by 2030**
 - **Double energy efficiency improvements**
- Launched **Mission 300**, a World Bank–AfDB effort to provide electricity to **300 million Africans by 2030**.

Launch of the G20 Critical Minerals Framework

- Accepted a **non-binding global framework** to ensure:
 - resilient and transparent critical mineral supply chains
 - sustainable mining practices
 - investment in mineral exploration in developing countries
- Stress on **local beneficiation/value-addition**, not mere raw mineral extraction.

Food Security & Right to Food Reaffirmed

- Recognised the hunger crisis (720 million people in 2024).
- Reaffirmed the **Right to Food** and denounced starvation as a weapon of war.
- Welcomed the **Ubuntu Approaches on Food Security and Nutrition**.
- Support for African smallholder farmers and AfCFTA food market integration.

Global AI Governance Framework Begins

- Welcomed the work of the **G20 Task Force on AI, Data Governance and Innovation**.
- Identified key AI principles: transparency, ethics, human oversight, bias reduction, safety, and accountability.
- Launched the **AI for Africa Initiative** for digital capacity-building.

Social Commitments on Youth & Gender

- Adopted **Nelson Mandela Bay Target**:
 - Reduce NEET youth percentage by **5% by 2030**.
- Updated **Brisbane–eThekweni Goal**:
 - Reduce gender labour-force participation gap by **25% by 2030**.
 - Reduce gender wage gap by **15% by 2035**.
- Focus on expanding economic rights, finance, and market access for women.

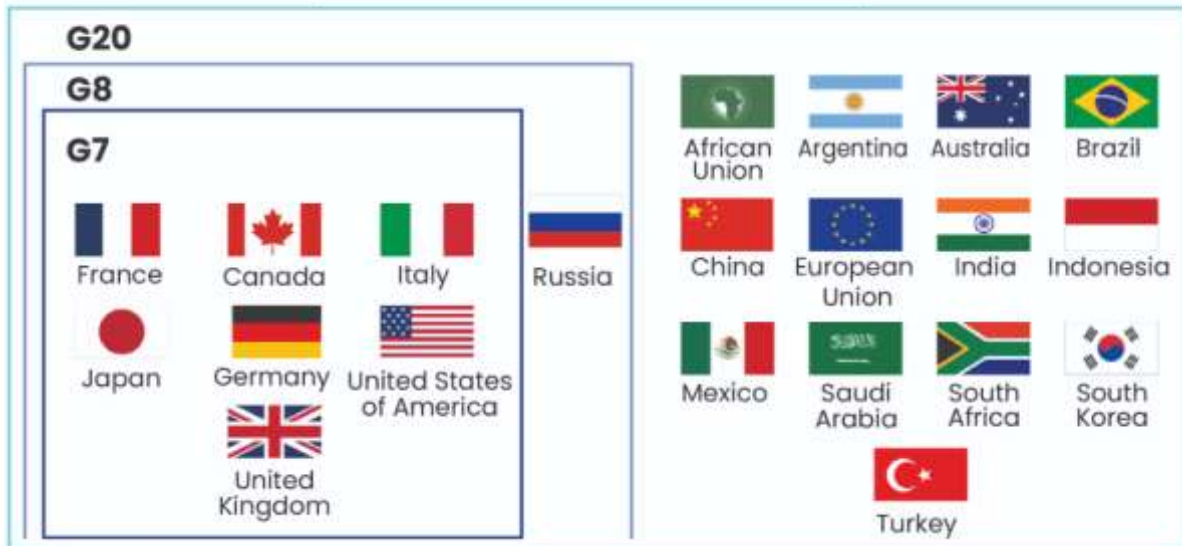
Renewed Global Governance Reform Agenda

- Strong, explicit call for **UN Security Council reform** to reflect 21st-century realities.
- Push for **greater representation of Africa, Latin America, and large developing nations**.
- IBSA countries (India, Brazil, South Africa) jointly reiterated demand for new permanent members.

WHAT IS THE G20?

- The **Group of Twenty (G20)**, now effectively the **G21**, is an intergovernmental forum comprising **19 countries**—Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States—**along with the European Union and the African Union** (which became a permanent member during the Delhi Summit in 2023).
- The G20 members represent around **85% of the global GDP, over 75% of the global trade, and about two-thirds of the world population**.
- The **G20 was founded in 1999 after the Asian financial crisis** as a forum for the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to discuss global economic and financial issues.

Members of G 20

**WHY THE G20 IS SIGNIFICANT FOR INDIA:**

- **India's Rise as a Leading Voice of the Global South:**
 - The G20 provides India a unique platform to champion the concerns of developing nations.
 - **For instance**, during **India's 2023 Presidency**, the **"Voice of the Global South Summit"** was convened, placing the priorities of Africa, SIDS, and low-income economies at the centre of the G20 agenda.
 - India strongly pushed for the **African Union's induction as a permanent G20 member**, which was achieved during the Delhi Summit—an outcome that elevated India's credibility as a bridge between developed and developing worlds.
- **Gateway to Global Economic Governance Reform:**
 - The G20 is the **premier forum for international economic cooperation**, giving India influence in shaping global rules.
 - **For instance**, G20 discussions have helped India push for **IMF quota reforms**, ensuring a fairer voice for emerging economies.
 - The 2025 Johannesburg Declaration (backed by India) welcomed a **new IMF Executive Board seat for Sub-Saharan Africa**, aligning with India's long-standing stance on democratizing Bretton Woods institutions.
- **Enhancing India's Energy Security & Climate Leadership:**
 - As India balances development with climate goals, the G20 gives it space to negotiate equitable climate responsibilities.
 - **For instance**, India consistently argues for **climate finance**, **technology transfer**, and recognition of **differentiated responsibilities**—positions repeatedly reflected in G20 communiqués.
 - The 2025 Summit endorsed India-backed global targets to **triple renewable energy capacity** and **double energy efficiency improvements** by 2030.
 - G20 also strengthens India's role in clean energy transitions.
 - **For instance**, India co-leads initiatives on **green hydrogen**, **solar power**, and **disaster-resilient infrastructure (CDRI)**.
- **Supporting India's Development Priorities (Infrastructure, Digital, Energy):**

- The G20 amplifies India's domestic strengths—digital governance, fintech, inclusive growth.
- **For example**, India showcased its **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** model (UPI, Aadhaar, DigiLocker), now being adopted across Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
- **For instance**, the G20 endorsed the **Global DPI Repository**, which India leads, reflecting India's soft-power in technology-enabled inclusion.
- Large multilateral infrastructure commitments also benefit India:

- Under the Delhi Summit, India supported the **India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**—a strategic connectivity initiative enhancing trade and chain diversification.



supply

- **Strengthens India's Leadership on Critical Minerals & Supply Chains:**

- India needs secure supply chains for semiconductors, EVs, and renewable technologies.
- The G20's focus on **critical minerals resilience** directly aligns with India's ambitions.
- **For example**, the 2025 G20 Critical Minerals Framework—supported by India—promotes transparent, stable, and sustainable mineral supply chains.
- India's partnerships with Australia, Africa, and Latin American countries on lithium, cobalt, and rare earths gain legitimacy through the G20 platform.

- **Vital Platform for Debt Sustainability Solutions Affecting Indian Neighbourhood:**

- Many South Asian countries—Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal—face debt vulnerabilities. India supports **sovereign debt restructuring frameworks** that do not compromise national sovereignty.
- **For instance**, India actively participates in the **G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatment**, which is shaping restructuring negotiations for countries like Zambia and Ethiopia.
- India's insistence on **transparency from private lenders and China's state-linked banks** gains global support through the G20.

- **Boost to India's Global Branding & Diplomatic Influence:**

- Hosting and leading in the G20 strengthens India's profile as a responsible global leader.
- **For example**, the success of India's 2023 Presidency—with a unanimous declaration despite sharp geopolitical divisions—was widely seen as a diplomatic victory.
- India's convening ability enhanced its credibility in climate diplomacy, digital cooperation, health, and women-led development.
- G20 visibility assists India's campaigns for:
 - UNSC permanent seat
 - leadership in climate negotiations
 - normative leadership in technology governance
 - South-South cooperation

- **Opportunity to Shape Global Norms on AI, Technology & Data Governance:**

- As digital geopolitics rises, G20 is the key forum for shaping rules.

- **For instance**, India's advocacy for **safe, responsible, human-centric AI** has influenced G20 discussions.
- **For example**, the 2025 G20 supported principles on AI safety, transparency, ethics, privacy, and human oversight—reflecting India's regulatory stance. India's strength in affordable digital innovation gives it unique norm-setting power.
- **Advancing India's Food, Agriculture & Development Diplomacy:**
 - Food security is a long-term priority for India.
 - **For example**, India has consistently pushed for recognition of the **Right to Food** in G20 declarations—including 2025.
 - **For instance**, G20 support for smallholder farmers, climate-resilient agriculture, and AfCFTA collaboration aligns with India's development partnerships across Africa. G20 positions also help India argue at WTO for its **public stockholding (PDS)** and **food subsidy policies**.
- **Platform for Coalition-Building with Like-Minded Nations:**
 - **India** leverages G20 to form issue-based coalitions:
 - **For example**, India cooperates with IBSA (India-Brazil-South Africa) to push for **UNSC reform**, which was strongly reflected in the 2025 Declaration.
 - India works with Indonesia, South Africa, Brazil, and Saudi Arabia on energy transitions, digital governance, and supply chain restructuring. G20 participation strengthens India's ties with both developed (EU, Japan, UK) and emerging powers (Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico).

CHALLENGES FOR INDIA IN THE G20:

- **Increasing Geopolitical Polarisation:**
 - The G20 is no longer a consensus-driven forum; deep geopolitical divides often stall decision-making.
 - **For example**, during India's 2023 Presidency, the Russia–Ukraine conflict made consensus extremely difficult, requiring 200+ hours of negotiations.
 - **For instance**, the 2025 Johannesburg Declaration was finalised **without the United States**, showing widening fractures that weaken the G20's global legitimacy. This fragmentation complicates India's ability to build common positions on climate, trade, and development.
- **US–China Rivalry Limits Cooperative Outcomes:**
 - Escalating tensions between the world's two largest economies often overshadow India's priorities.
 - **For instance**, data governance and technology rules get stuck because China pushes for state-centric models while the US supports private-sector-driven norms.
 - Even climate language becomes politicised; the US boycotted the 2025 summit because the declaration included the term "climate change".
 - This rivalry narrows the space for India's middle-power diplomacy.
- **Resistance to Reform from Developed Nations:**
 - India's long-standing demands—IMF quota reform, UNSC expansion, climate finance—face pushback.
 - **For instance**, developed countries have been reluctant to commit to **USD 100 billion climate finance**, let alone the trillions needed.
 - IMF reforms remain slow because countries like the US and Europe are unwilling to dilute their voting share. This limits India's agenda-setting capacity.
- **China's Growing Influence in Global South Politics:**

- China often positions itself as the alternative leader of developing countries, challenging India's role.
- **For instance**, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) influences decision-making in African, Asian, and Latin American countries that India seeks to work with through G20.
- In debt restructuring under the G20 Common Framework, China's reluctance to take haircuts has delayed outcomes for countries like Zambia—undermining India-backed reforms.
- **Limited Enforcement Power of the G20:**
 - G20 declarations are **non-binding**, making it difficult to convert commitments into action.
 - **For example**, despite repeated commitments to phase out fossil fuel subsidies, global subsidies have actually increased in recent years.
 - **For instance**, the 2025 commitment to “triple renewable energy capacity” has no enforcement mechanism. India must therefore rely on persuasion rather than institutional authority.
- **Balancing Domestic Interests with Global Expectations:**
 - India must negotiate climate and trade rules without compromising domestic development needs.
 - **For example**, developed countries push for net-zero by 2050, but India's current pathway targets 2070.
 - Proposals for carbon border taxes (like EU CBAM) clash with India's export competitiveness. G20 negotiations require India to walk a tightrope between global responsibility and developmental priorities.
- **Capacity and Resource Constraints:**
 - Unlike G7 powers, India has limited financial capacity to lead large global initiatives.
 - **For example**, India pressed for climate finance expansion, but it cannot match the financial commitments of the US, EU, or China.
 - India's digital public infrastructure push is successful, but scaling it globally requires significant funds. This disparity sometimes reduces India's influence in outcomes that are capital-intensive.
- **Divergent Priorities Within Global South:**
 - Even within the Global South, interests differ.
 - **For example**, oil-rich countries (Saudi Arabia, Brazil) may oppose strong climate language that India supports.
 - African countries prioritise debt relief, while Latin America emphasises critical minerals governance—sometimes creating competing agendas. This complicates India's attempt to act as a unified “voice of the Global South”.
- **Domestic Political Polarisation and Bureaucratic Burden:**
 - Hosting/leading G20 requires enormous bureaucratic coordination and political continuity.
 - **For example**, India's 2023 Presidency required coordination across 200+ meetings in 50 cities.
 - Domestic political transitions (e.g., elections) can reshape prioritisation and follow-up on commitments. This makes long-term G20 agenda-setting harder.
- **Inadequate Follow-Through Mechanisms:**
 - Many G20 initiatives require long-term consistency.
 - **For example**, the **Global DPI Repository** needs sustained operational support beyond India's presidency.

- Mission LiFE, CDRI, and the One Earth One Future agenda require years of diplomatic push to remain relevant. Sustained international engagement is resource-intensive.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Build Strong Issue-Based Coalitions:**
 - Strengthen ties with IBSA, ASEAN, African Union, and other middle powers to navigate great-power rivalry. **For example**, coordinated IBSA action at the 2025 Summit helped push UNSC reform.
- **Pursue Incremental Global Governance Reforms:** Focus on practical, step-by-step changes—IMF quota updates, debt transparency rules, and fair lending norms—rather than waiting for complete overhauls.
- **Lead on Climate Finance & Energy Transition:** Push for predictable climate finance, blended finance models, and MDB reforms. India can leverage the G20 “billions to trillions” agenda to secure resources for developing nations.
- **Institutionalise Digital & AI Governance Leadership:** Scale India-led platforms like the Global DPI Repository and shape ethical, human-centric AI frameworks adopted by the G20.
- **Deepen South–South Cooperation:** Expand partnerships with Africa, Latin America, and island nations through technology transfer, digital infrastructure, and critical minerals collaboration.
- **Strengthen Domestic Alignment & Follow-Through:** A permanent G20 coordination mechanism can ensure continuity on commitments like Mission LiFE, IMEC, and energy transition goals.

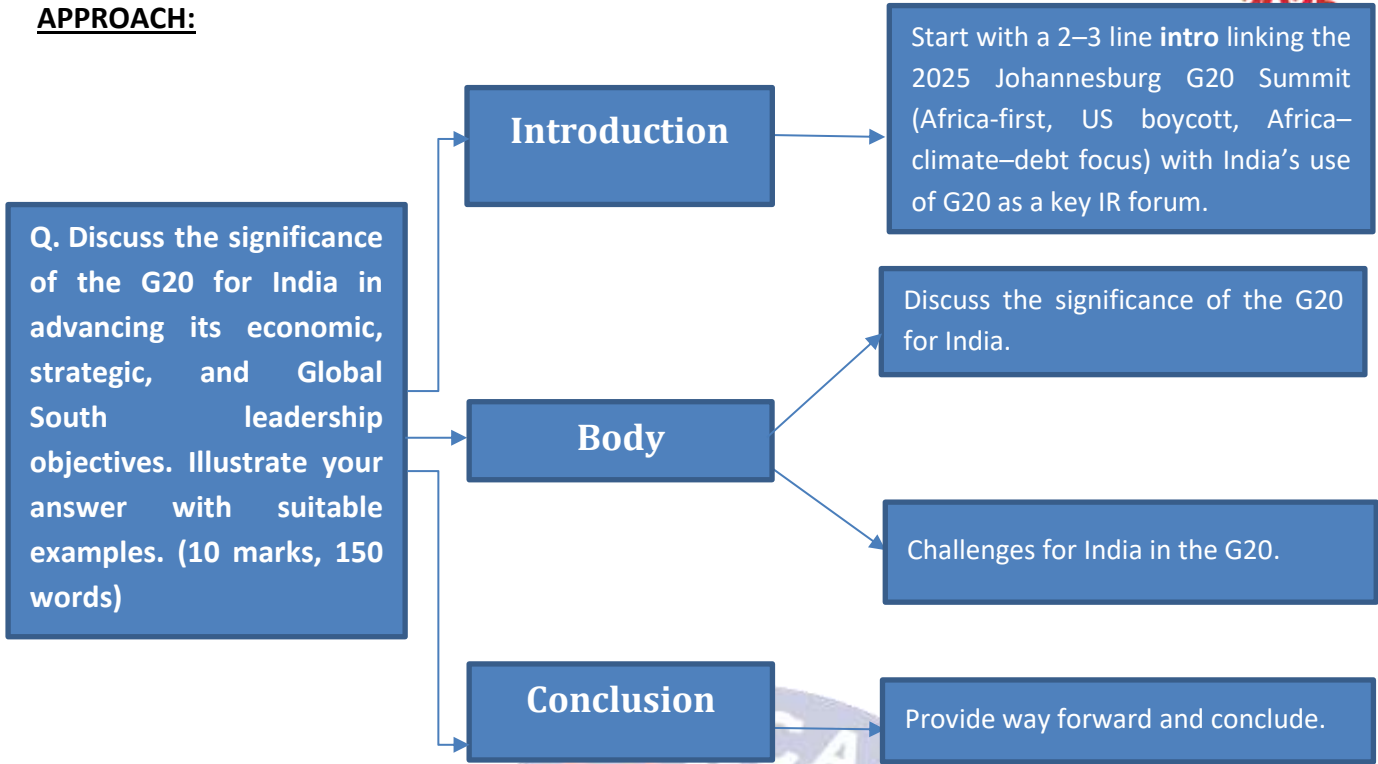
CONCLUSION:

- The G20 is a vital platform for India to **advance Global South priorities, shape global economic rules, and lead on climate, digital and development agendas**. Yet geopolitical polarisation, slow reforms, and competing interests limit outcomes. By building coalitions, pushing realistic reforms, leading on technology and climate issues, and strengthening South–South partnerships, India can sustain its growing influence and help make the **G20 more representative, inclusive, and effective in the 21st century**.

PRACTICE QUESTION:

Q. Discuss the significance of the G20 for India in advancing its economic, strategic, and Global South leadership objectives. Illustrate your answer with suitable examples. (10 marks, 150 words)

APPROACH:



MODEL ANSWER:

The 20th G20 Summit (Johannesburg, 2025)—the first on African soil and adopted even without US participation—focused on **Africa-centric development, climate action, debt sustainability, AI governance, and UNSC reform**. In this context, the G20 remains a key forum through which India advances its strategic priorities and Global South leadership.

Significance for India:

1. **Leading Voice of the Global South:** The G20 allows India to champion developing-country concerns. **For example**, India's 2023 *Voice of the Global South Summit* and its successful push for **African Union's permanent membership** elevated its status as a bridge between diverse economies.
2. **Influence in Global Economic Governance:** India uses the G20 to push IMF and MDB reforms. **For instance**, the 2025 Summit created a **25th IMF Board seat for Sub-Saharan Africa**, reflecting India's long-standing call for fairer representation.
3. **Energy Security & Climate Leadership:** The G20 creates space to negotiate equitable climate responsibilities. **For example**, the 2025 Declaration endorsed India-backed goals to **triple renewable capacity** and **expand energy access**.
4. **Technology and Digital Public Goods Diplomacy:** India's DPI model is gaining global traction. **For instance**, the *Global DPI Repository* endorsed by G20 showcases India as a technology norm-setter.
5. **Strengthening Critical Minerals & Supply Chain Security:** The 2025 **Critical Minerals Framework** supports India's need for stable mineral supply for EVs, semiconductors, and renewable technologies.
6. **Neighbourhood Stability through Debt Solutions:** India's participation in the **G20 Common Framework** aligns with its interest in stabilising debt-stressed neighbours like Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

7. **Boost to Strategic & Diplomatic Influence:** G20 visibility strengthens India's campaign for **UNSC reform**, climate negotiations leadership, and South-South cooperation. **For example**, India, Brazil and South Africa jointly renewed the push for UNSC expansion at Johannesburg.

Challenges for India in the G20:

1. **Rising Geopolitical Polarisation:** The G20 is increasingly divided on global issues. **For example**, the US boycott of the 2025 Summit reflects growing geopolitical fractures, complicating India's efforts to forge consensus on climate, trade, and development.
2. **US–China Rivalry Overshadowing Agenda:** Competing technological and strategic visions of the US and China often stall progress. **For instance**, India's proposals on data governance and AI face hurdles because China backs state-centric norms while the US promotes market-centric models.
3. **Reluctance of Developed Countries to Share Power:** Long-pending reforms in IMF quotas, climate finance, and UNSC expansion face resistance. **For example**, developed nations hesitate to dilute their voting share or commit to large-scale climate finance needed by developing countries.
4. **China's Expanding Influence in the Global South:** China's Belt and Road Initiative shapes preferences across Africa and Latin America, sometimes diluting India's developmental outreach. **For instance**, China's reluctance to take haircuts in the G20 Common Framework delays debt restructuring in countries like Zambia.
5. **Non-Binding Nature of G20 Commitments:** The G20 lacks enforcement mechanisms. **For example**, despite repeated pledges, fossil fuel subsidies worldwide have risen, limiting India's ability to leverage G20 outcomes effectively.

Way Forward:

- Deepen issue-based coalitions with IBSA, AU, ASEAN, and other middle powers.
- Promote incremental global governance reforms—IMF quotas, debt transparency standards, and fair lending norms.
- Lead climate finance mobilisation and shape inclusive, human-centric AI governance.
- Expand South–South development partnerships and strengthen domestic follow-through through a permanent G20 coordination mechanism.

The G20 offers India a crucial platform to shape global economic rules, lead the Global South, and drive climate and digital agendas. While geopolitical tensions and slow reforms pose challenges, sustained coalition-building and proactive diplomacy can enhance India's influence and make the G20 more effective and representative in the evolving global order.