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The Making of India's G20 Presidency: An Organizational Perspective

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A week after the conclusion of the 2023 New Delhi G20 Summit (9-10 September), Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, addressing the Special Session of Parliament on 18 September, said that “the success of the G20 is the success of 1.4 billion citizens of India...not the success of any individual or party. India’s federal structure, its diversity, and its hosting of over 200 meetings in more than 60 locations, each with its own unique flavour, have been done magnificently by different state governments. This impact has been felt on the global stage...and enhances the glory of the nation.”

The statement above so eloquently captures India’s visionary organizational approach to its year-long Presidency, which has widely been recognized as a great success on all counts. The term, which began on 1 December 2022, had completed ten months of its substantive works by the time the leaders gathered for the 18th G20 Summit in India’s capital. Here, in an unprecedented and outcome-oriented move, Prime Minister Modi announced that the

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leaders will again virtually convene towards the end of November 2023 to take stock of the progress made on the New Delhi Summit recommendations. After this, Brazil will officially take over on 1 December 2023.

There has been a great deal of popular support for the country's diplomatic efforts. Like the Chandrayaan-3 landing moment in the last week of August, this Presidency has been a high point for India's global leadership, public policy making and showcasing India to the world; it is now a part of the Indian lexicon.

To shed light on the multifaceted, human-centric approach underpinning India's G20 Presidency, we can identify seven key 'petals' that have shaped both its substantive and organizational drive:

A Visionary Approach: Inclusiveness

The making of India's Presidency has been inspired by an inclusive vision of 'Taking G20 to the Last Mile, Leaving None Behind'. Speaking at the Bali Summit 2022, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi articulated that India assumed leadership of this intergovernmental forum during a period marked by concurrent challenges of geopolitical tensions, economic deceleration, surging food and energy costs, and the enduring repercussions of the pandemic. He pledged that India's stewardship would be "inclusive, ambitious, decisive, and action-oriented", and that "together, we [would] make the G20 a catalyst for global change". This inclusive approach has unfolded as we have steered through the Presidency by embracing an agenda with human-centric progress at its core.

An Effective Organizational Framework

The absence of a permanent secretariat or dedicated staff within the G20 framework places the onus to establish a robust support system on the Presidency.

Our Presidency has been in the making for some time. At the 2018 G20 Summit in Argentina, India had sought a swap with Italy so that it could be President of the grouping during the 75th Anniversary of Independence in 2022. This did not go through ultimately. Later, Indonesia proposed a swap with India due to the fact that it would be chairing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2023. This rotational arrangement was mutually agreed on. Therefore, the actual preparations for India's Presidency began in the right earnest when it joined the 'troika' on 1 December 2021, along with Italy as Past President and Indonesia as the incoming President.

In a major development on 15 February 2022, the Union Cabinet approved the setting up of a G20 Secretariat and its reporting structures for the implementation of overall policy decisions and arrangements needed for steering India's Presidency until February 2024. Subsequently, the Secretariat swiftly assumed operational status, shouldering responsibilities related to substantive matters, technical intricacies, media management, security protocols, and overall organizational plan. It is guided by an Apex Committee headed by the Prime Minister, and comprises the Finance Minister, Home Minister, External Affairs Minister, and G20 Sherpa to provide overall guidance to the Presidency.

Notably, the New Delhi Summit marked Prime Minister Modi's 10th participation in a G20 Summit. As a host leader, he had tasked the Secretariat to develop an organizational plan to give a "full experience of India's amazing diversity, inclusive traditions, and cultural richness" to visiting guests. This could only have been possible by adopting a 'whole-of-country approach', in which Central Government Ministries, States and Union Territories, and local bodies all become stakeholders. Over the past ten months, this approach has emerged as our guiding mantra.

Unifying Principles: Logo and Theme

India's G20 Logo was unveiled by Prime Minister Modi on 8 November 2022. It draws inspiration from the vivid hue of India's national flag – saffron, white, green, and blue. Within this logo, a harmonious juxtaposition emerges, as it interweaves the image of planet Earth with the lotus, India's national flower, symbolizing growth amidst challenges. The Earth symbolizes India's deeply-rooted pro-planet ethos, reflecting life in perfect alignment with the natural world. Below the G20 logo is 'Bharat', written in the Devanagari script. The Logo drew upon elements contained in over 2000 different entries received in May 2022 during an open competition for the design on the MyGov portal.

The theme of India's G20 Presidency – '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' or 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' - is drawn from the ancient Sanskrit text of the *Maha Upanishad*. Essentially, it affirms the value of all life – human, animal, and plant – and its interconnectedness in the wider universe. During the conceptualization of this theme, it became evident that India was championing a philosophy that emphasizes the value of all living beings, the bonds that unite us, and our collective destiny.

The logo and the theme together convey a powerful message of India's G20 Presidency, which is of striving for just and equitable growth as we navigate through turbulent times in a sustainable, holistic, responsible, and inclusive manner. India is committed to take all along; its pledge has been to ensure that no one is left behind, thus encapsulating the essence of 'G20 for all.'

Advancing G20 Agenda

India has been an active participant in the G20 ever since it was founded in 1999 as an informal forum for the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the most important industrialized

and developing economies. Actually, it even hosted a meeting of G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors in 2002.

The Presidency is responsible for bringing together the G20 agenda in consultation with other members, especially the ‘troika’, in response to developments in the global economy. During India’s Presidency, the members of the ‘troika’ have been Indonesia, India and Brazil, all dynamic emerging economies.

India formally announced the date, the list of special invitee countries and organizations, and the major thematic priorities on 13 September 2022. In addition to the core member countries, encompassing 19 nations and the European Union, each G20 Presidency has invited guest countries and international organizations (IOs) to participate in the meetings and summits. India this year invited Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain and UAE as guest countries. For Guest IOs, it invited ISA, CDRI and ADB in addition to the regular IOs (UN, IMF, WB, WHO, WTO, ILO, FSB and OECD) and Chairs of Regional Organizations (AU, AUDA-NEPAD and ASEAN). Therefore, New Delhi saw the participation of nine Invitee countries and 14 IOs, apart from the regular members.

The same September statement mentioned that whilst our G20 priorities were in the process of being firmed up, ongoing conversations inter alia pointed to revolve around inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth; LiFE (Lifestyle For Environment); women’s empowerment; digital public infrastructure and tech-enabled development in areas ranging from health, agriculture and education to commerce, skill-mapping, culture and tourism; climate financing; circular economy; global food and energy security; green hydrogen; disaster risk reduction and resilience; developmental cooperation; fight against economic crime; and multilateral reforms.

Several noteworthy additions have also been made to the agenda by the Indian Presidency. These include the establishment of a new

Working Group focused on Disaster Risk Reduction, the introduction of a new Startup20 Engagement Group, and the implementation of two distinct Initiatives: a Roundtable of Chief Scientific Advisors and a Conference on Cyber Security. Our ambitious agenda has comprised of a comprehensive array of 37 work streams and subject areas, encompassing vital domains such as trade, climate change, sustainable development, health, agriculture, energy, environment, climate change, and anti-corruption, among others.

Giving Voice to the Global South

When India assumed the Presidency last December, it was acutely conscious that most of the Global South would not have a direct seat at the G20 table. Therefore, a strategic decision was made to convene the ‘Voice of the Global South Summit’ in January 2023. India heard from 125 nations directly about their challenges and priorities and amplifying these voices has taken its Presidency to a higher plane.

Moreover, this year saw the highest participation from Africa at the New Delhi Summit: South Africa (the only African member country till now), Mauritius, Egypt, Nigeria, African Union Chair (Comoros), and the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa’s Development (AUDA-NEPAD). After seven years of advocating for full membership, the support for a permanent membership for the African Union, which till now was an invitee international organization, gained momentum under India’s leadership. Prime Minister Modi, in his opening remarks at the Inaugural Session of the Summit, admitted the 55-nation regional bloc (the second after the 27-member European Union).

Africa continues to disproportionately suffer from the world’s greatest issues like climate change, food and energy insecurity, health, inequality, and debt. Therefore, the G20 membership is an important complement to the Union’s existing multilateral and bilateral strategic partnerships and this move has been broadly

welcomed for giving the continent an important voice on key global issues.

Narrating the India Story

200+ meetings across India have provided unique opportunities to present and share the India story with the global community, be it its diversity, culture, democracy, development and technological transformation. More than 60,000 delegates have been hosted across the length and breadth of India – from Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands in the south to Jammu & Kashmir in the north, Gujarat and Diu in the west to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in the east.

At the newly-built Summit venue, Bharat Mandapam, several thematic exhibits were installed to promote India's soft power: 'Bharat: Mother of Democracy', which highlighted that "taking the consent of the people in governance has been part of life since earliest recorded history". It also included a Digital India Experience Zone and Crafts Bazaar, which showcased and sold handicrafts products from different parts of India with a special focus on 'One District One Product' (ODOP), Geographical Indication (GI) tagged items and products crafted by women and tribal artisans. Delegates also enjoyed special live demonstrations by master craftsmen, enhancing the immersive experience.

People's G20

The 2023 Presidency, which has come to India for the first time, has been more than just a multilateral diplomatic endeavour; it has evolved into a year-long national undertaking and celebration, involving the entire Central Government, all 36 States and Union Territories, the Parliament, businesses, hospitality industry, academia, professionals, scientists, cultural groups, media, and most notably, the youth.

In the annals of Independent India's history, there has never been an event of such magnitude and scope carried out over an entire year, touching every corner of the nation. We have embraced a distinctive approach, pioneered by Prime Minister Modi himself in his *Mann Ki Baat* address (November 2022), emphasizing the infusion of *Jan Bhagidari* (People's Participation) into our endeavours. Aligning with this vision, we have achieved an unparalleled geographical reach for G20 meetings, with 230 meetings scheduled across 60 different locations - a remarkable feat under any G20 Presidency. In the history of the group, the largest footprint of meetings has been achieved by India. In comparison, Indonesia conducted its 2022 meetings in 15 cities, Italy in 13 in 2021, Japan in nine in 2019, and Argentina in 11 in 2018. China and Germany also held their gatherings in 12 and seven cities, respectively, in 2016 and 2017.

Our success in engaging our citizenry as active participants in the process stands as a testament to our commitment to inclusive governance.

There is a profound sense of national pride amongst people regarding India's successful G20 Presidency and its pivotal role in projecting India onto the global stage. For India, the year of leadership also marks the beginning of *Amritkaal*, the 25-year period leading up to the centenary of its independence in 2047, towards a prosperous, inclusive and developed country. In this context, our G20 leadership is poised to leave an enduring legacy by bolstering our infrastructure and capacity in physical, intellectual, and organizational domains, showcasing India's potential to the world, and shaping a positive global narrative that echoes our achievements and aspirations.

“India's youth, our young talent, is also for the global good, in the form of One Family.

In the times to come, having a large skilled young talent pool is crucial to sustain global growth.

Therefore, we should move towards 'Global Skill Mapping'. ”

*— Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India*