CA & GK

G20 Cheat Sheet /What is G20 2026

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G20 for CLAT Aspirants: Everything You Need to Know for the Current Affairs Section

If you are preparing for CLAT, you have probably already noticed that the General Knowledge and Current Affairs (GKCA) section rewards students who understand *why* an institution matters, not just its date of birth. Few topics illustrate this better than the **G20.** It sits at the intersection of international relations, economics, and Indian foreign policy — exactly the kind of multi-dimensional topic CLAT loves to test through passage-based questions.

1. What Exactly Is the G20?

The G20, or Group of **Twenty**, is an intergovernmental forum comprising **19 countries**, the **European Union, and (since 2023**) the **African Union**. It was created to bring together the world's major developed and developing economies to discuss issues of global economic stability, financial regulation, and — over time — a much broader agenda including trade, climate, health, and digital economy.
Unlike the United Nations, the **G20** has no permanent secretariat, no formal charter, and no legally binding powers. It functions purely through consensus and diplomatic coordination.
This is a crucial point for CLAT: examiners often test whether students confuse the G20 with a treaty-based organisation like the WTO or a UN body. It is neither. It is a forum — a annual rotating conversation among the world's largest economies, collectively representing around 85% of global GDP, over 75% of global trade, and about two-thirds of the world's population.

Why does this matter for CLAT?

CLAT's GKCA passages frequently test institutional literacy — knowing what a body is meant to do, its legal character, and how decisions made there translate (or fail to translate) into binding law.

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2. The Origin Story: From G7 to G20

To understand the G20, you need a short history lesson, because CLAT often frames GK questions historically.

- **1997–99: The Asian Financial Crisis** exposed how interconnected the global economy had become, and how emerging economies like **Indonesia**, **Thailand,** and **South Korea** could destabilise markets far beyond their borders. The G7 (a club of the world's richest democracies — **US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan)** realised that discussions on financial stability could no longer exclude large emerging economies.
- **1999: The G20 was formed**, initially as a meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors, not heads of state. Its first meeting was held in Berlin.
- **2008: The Global Financial Crisis** was the turning point. As markets crashed worldwide, world leaders recognised that finance ministers alone could not coordinate a response of this scale. The G20 was elevated to the level of Heads of

State and Government, with the first leaders' summit held in **Washington, D.C.** in November 2008.

Since then, the G20 has met every year, expanding its scope well beyond finance to include trade, employment, energy, anti-corruption, health, digital economy, and climate change.

CLAT tip: Remember the sequence — 1997 Asian Financial Crisis → 1999 G20 formed (finance ministers level) → 2008 Global Financial Crisis → 2008 first Leaders' Summit in Washington. This causal chain is a favourite for both factual and reasoning-based questions.

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3. Membership: Who's In the Room?

The G20 consists of

19 countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Plus two regional blocs:

- The **European Union**, a founding-level participant since the G20's inception.
- The **African Union**, admitted as a permanent member during India's presidency at the **2023 New Delhi Summit** — a landmark moment for African representation in global economic governance and one of the signature achievements of India's G20 year.

Beyond permanent membership, the host country each year invites additional "guest" nations and international organisations — bodies like the UN, WHO, WTO, IMF, World Bank, and regional development banks are regularly invited to G20 discussions, even though they are not members.

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4. How the G20 Actually Works

There is **no G20 headquarters** and no standing bureaucracy. Instead, the G20 operates through a **rotating annual presidency**.

Each year, a different member country chairs the G20, hosts the leaders' summit, sets the agenda, and coordinates the many ministerial meetings and working groups that happen throughout the year.

The presidency rotates among the different regional groupings, and outgoing, current, and incoming presidencies work together informally as a **"Troika"** to ensure continuity of agenda from one year to the next.

Two broad tracks structure G20 work:

1. **The Finance Track** — led by finance ministers and central bank governors, focused on macroeconomic policy, financial regulation, taxation, and debt sustainability.
2. **The Sherpa Track** — led by each country's "Sherpa" (a senior official who prepares the ground for the leaders' summit), covering the broader agenda: trade, agriculture, health, employment, anti-corruption, energy, environment, tourism, culture, and digital economy.

At the end of each year's discussions, the host typically issues a **Leaders' Declaration** — a consensus statement summarising the group's shared priorities. Because the G20 is not a treaty body, this declaration is politically significant but not legally enforceable.

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5. India's G20 Presidency (2022–2023): The Centrepiece for CLAT

This is, without question, the most exam-relevant chapter of the G20 story for Indian law aspirants, so let's go deep.

India held the G20 presidency from **1 December 2022 to 30 November 2023**, culminating in the **18th G20 Leaders' Summit, held on 9–10 September 2023 at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.**

Key facts to remember:

- **Theme:** *"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"* — a Sanskrit phrase from the Maha Upanishad meaning **"One Earth, One Family, One Future."** This phrase is a CLAT favourite; expect direct recall questions on its meaning and Sanskrit origin.

- **Logo:** Combined the Indian tricolour with a globe atop a lotus, alongside "Bharat" written beneath "India" — itself a subject of public discussion at the time regarding India's global branding.

- **Venue:** Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi — India's newly built international convention centre, inaugurated ahead of the summit.
- **Chair:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- **Landmark outcome:** The **New Delhi Leaders' Declaration**, adopted by consensus despite the geopolitical tensions surrounding the Russia-Ukraine conflict — widely reported as a major diplomatic achievement for India's presidency, since previous G20 meetings that year had struggled to agree on joint statements.
- **African Union's admission** as a permanent G20 member, announced by PM Modi at the opening of the summit — a moment considered symbolically significant for India's positioning as a voice of the developing world.
- India's presidency also emphasised **inclusive growth, digital public infrastructure** (showcasing India's UPI and Aadhaar-based systems), **climate finance, women-led development,** and **reform of multilateral institutions** such as the UN Security Council and international financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank.
- A notable side outcome was the announcement of the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**, a proposed multi-modal transport and infrastructure corridor connecting India to Europe via the Gulf and Israel — frequently tested alongside G20 questions because of its geo-economic significance.

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6. Why the G20 Matters for CLAT's Legal and Constitutional Themes

CLAT's current affairs section is not asked in isolation — it often connects to the legal reasoning and constitutional sections through passage-based comprehension. Here's how the G20 links to broader legal themes you should be comfortable discussing in an essay or passage context:

- **Global economic governance and sovereignty:** The G20's consensus-based, non-binding structure raises interesting jurisprudential questions about how international soft law shapes domestic policy without formal treaty obligations — a useful conceptual bridge to international law modules.

- **India's foreign policy doctrine:** The G20 presidency reflected India's stated foreign policy approach of **"Vishwa Bandhu"** (friend to the world) and its positioning as a bridge between the developed and developing world — themes that also surface in questions about India's UN Security Council reform advocacy.
- **Institutional comparison:** Many CLAT passages ask students to compare the G20 with the G7, BRICS, WTO, and the UN — understanding the legal character (binding vs non-binding), membership basis, and founding purpose of each is essential.

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7. Quick Revision Table

Year	Host Country	City	Theme/Notes
2008	United States	Washington, D.C.	First Leaders' Summit
2021	Italy	Rome	"People, Planet, and Prosperity"
2022	Indonesia	Bali	"Recover Together, Recover Stronger"
2023	India	New Delhi	"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"; AU admitted
2024	Brazil	Rio de Janeiro	"Building a Just World..."
2025	South Africa	Johannesburg	First summit in Africa
2026	United States	Miami area	Narrower agenda; South Africa excluded

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8. Sample Practice Questions

1. Which Sanskrit phrase, meaning "One Earth, One Family, One Future," served as the theme of India's G20 presidency?
2. The African Union was admitted as a permanent member of the G20 during which country's presidency?
3. Arrange in chronological order: (a) First G20 Leaders' Summit (b) Formation of G20 at finance minister level (c) Asian Financial Crisis (d) New Delhi G20 Summit.

4. Which was the first G20 summit to be held on the African continent?
5. What is the "Sherpa Track" in the context of the G20?

(Answers: 1. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam; 2. India, 2023; 3. c □ b □ a □ d; 4. 2025 Johannesburg Summit; 5. The track led by senior officials called Sherpas that prepares the broader, non-finance agenda for the leaders' summit.)