G-20 Johannesburg Summit Boycott by the U.S.

1.Background of the Summit

- The **G-20 Leaders' Summit in Johannesburg** was held in an African country for the **first time**.
- The summit held special significance as:
 - The **African Union (AU)** was made a **permanent member** of the G-20 during India's presidency in 2023.
 - This expanded the voice of the Global South within global governance platforms.

2. Key Themes in the Summit's Declaration

- The summit focused extensively on the problems confronting the world:
 - Multiple global conflicts
 - Rising **inequality**
 - Increasing economic uncertainty
- A call for "just, comprehensive, and lasting peace" in:
 - Sudan
 - DR Congo
 - Occupied Palestinian Territories
 - Ukraine
- The declaration invoked commitment to the **UN Charter**.

3. India's Key Interventions and Proposals

Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated actively and suggested **six major initiatives** for global cooperation:

1. Traditional Knowledge Repository

To preserve and share India's indigenous knowledge systems.

2. G20-Africa Skills Multiplier Initiative

 • India to train 1 million Africans in various skills → strengthens India-Africa ties.

3. Global Healthcare Response Team

For coordinated medical assistance during global health crises.

4. Initiative on Countering the Drug-Terror Nexus

Addressing how drug trafficking finances terrorism.

5. Open Satellite Data Partnership

Sharing satellite information on agriculture, fisheries, disasters, etc.

6. G20 Critical Minerals Circularity Initiative

 Sustainable use and recycling of critical minerals essential for advanced technologies.

Additional Observations:

- India had a role in shaping the summit declaration.
- Government may have been disappointed with:
 - A brief reference to terrorism, especially compared to the stronger wording in the 2023 New Delhi Declaration.
 - Context: the **Delhi blast** and **Pahalgam attack** raised expectations for stronger mention.

4. U.S. Boycott of the Summit

- President Donald Trump not only skipped the summit but the U.S. government boycotted it entirely, sending only a low-level diplomat as observer.
- This is the first-ever U.S. boycott of a G-20 summit.
- U.S. justification:

 Disagreement with South Africa over "alleged discrimination" against white minority farmers.

Irony Highlighted

 Boycotting a nation that suffered discrimination under apartheid is diplomatically contradictory.

5. Implications of the U.S. Boycott

A. Diplomatic and Geopolitical Implications

- Raises concerns about U.S. commitment to multilateral forums like G-20, especially as it is set to take over the **G-20 presidency in 2026**.
- Weakens the narrative of G-20 emerging as a:
 - More inclusive and
 - More democratic global governance mechanism.

B. Impact on G-20 Functioning

- The absence of the world's largest economy:
 - Reduces political weight of discussions.
 - Undermines consensus-building.
 - Sends negative signals about coordination on global issues.

C. Lack of Strong Criticism

- Most leaders did not openly criticise the U.S., highlighting:
 - Geopolitical constraints,
 - Diplomatic caution, and
 - Power asymmetry within global institutions.

6. The Central Message: Ubuntu and Collective Responsibility

- The declaration referenced **Ubuntu**:
 "I am because we are" emphasising interdependence.
- The editorial argues:
 - Major powers like the U.S. must respect multilateral groupings.
 - Undermining platforms like the G-20 threatens global cooperation at a time when the world faces:
 - Conflicts
 - Inequality
 - Economic instability
 - Climate crises

7. UPSC-Relevant Takeaways

A. Polity & IR

- Role of G-20 in global governance.
- India's increasing influence in Global South diplomacy.
- U.S. behaviour in multilateral institutions.

B. GS-II Themes

- India-Africa relations.
- Global multilateralism vs unilateralism.
- Importance of collective responses to global challenges.

C. Essay Themes

- "Is multilateralism losing relevance?"
- "Global South: From marginalisation to leadership."

D. Ethics Angle

• Ubuntu reflects global ethical responsibility, cooperation, and humanitarianism.

8. Conclusion

- The U.S. boycott was **impolitic** and counterproductive.
- It undermines global efforts to build a cooperative world order.
- At a time of global instability, the spirit of **Ubuntu** must guide all major powers to strengthen not weaken multilateral institutions like the G-20.

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