

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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