



The  in Focus
G20




An Anthology of African
Analyses, Priorities and
Pathways

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Sunday I. Oyebamiji and Paul Kariuki



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Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to write the foreword to this timely and thought-provoking anthology, *The G20 in Focus: An Anthology of African Analyses, Priorities, and Pathways*. This publication, undertaken through the Democracy Development Program (DDP), comes at a critical moment in global history, one marked by uncertainty, transformation, and the redefinition of power relations in international governance. As South Africa assumes the chairship of the Group of Twenty (G20) and the African Union secures a permanent seat within this influential forum, the need for Africa to articulate its voice, vision, and values on the global stage has never been more urgent.

The G20 has become a central arena for pursuing global economic stability, sustainable development, and multilateral cooperation. Yet, for much of its existence, Africa's participation in this space has been limited to representation by a single state, South Africa. The inclusion of the African Union marks a significant milestone in the continent's long journey toward recognition. Still, it also serves as a reminder of the enduring inequalities that define global governance. This anthology acknowledges that reality while offering a powerful counterpoint: that Africa is not a passive observer of global events, but an active producer of ideas, solutions, and transformative possibilities.

What makes this anthology especially compelling is its multidimensional approach. The contributors, drawn from academia, civil society, and policy practice, examine the G20 through diverse yet interconnected lenses: financing for development, gender and labour, digital transformation, indigenous knowledge systems, and South Africa's evolving leadership role. Their collective insights reveal the depth and dynamism of African scholarship, as well as the importance of situating the continent's experiences within global debates. They remind us that the questions of equity, inclusion, and sustainability are not abstract ideals but urgent imperatives that demand action.

As an anthropologist, I am struck by how this work speaks to the intersections of culture, economy, and power. Anthropology teaches us that governance, like culture, is relational; it is sustained by dialogue, mutual recognition, and respect for difference. The G20, if it is to be truly global, must embody these principles. The voices

gathered in this anthology do precisely that; they offer new ways of seeing and understanding global governance, rooted in African realities yet universal in their implications.

One of the most striking themes emerging from this volume is the call for knowledge justice. The contributors remind us that for too long, global policymaking has been shaped by Eurocentric paradigms that privilege Western experiences while marginalising other ways of knowing. Africa's indigenous knowledge systems, community-based innovations, and historical resilience provide valuable resources for reimagining what global cooperation can look like. By amplifying these perspectives, this anthology not only diversifies global discourse but also challenges the hierarchies that have long structured it.

Equally important is the anthology's emphasis on inclusive democracy and civic participation. The DDP's commitment to democratic engagement is evident throughout the chapters. By highlighting the role of civil society, interfaith organizations, and citizens in shaping public policy, the contributors bridge the gap between global decision-making and local lived realities. This approach aligns closely with the DDP's mission to foster participatory democracy and with the University of KwaZulu-Natal's vision of scholarship that advances social justice and community engagement.

South Africa's leadership within the G20, as explored in this volume, offers both lessons and opportunities. It underscores the potential of African states to exercise agency in global affairs, to advocate for reforms that reflect the priorities of the Global South, and to model inclusive governance. It also challenges policymakers and scholars to think beyond representation, to envision a G20 that genuinely reflects the aspirations of all humanity.

The *G20 in Focus* project stands as a testament to what collaboration between academia and civil society can achieve. By bringing together researchers, practitioners, and activists, the Democracy Development Program (DDP) has created a platform that not only documents Africa's engagement with the G20 but also shapes its trajectory. This partnership exemplifies the transformative power of research when it is guided by purpose, inclusivity, and civic responsibility.

At a time when the world faces intertwined crises, from economic instability and climate change to digital inequality and social polarisation, Africa's perspectives are not peripheral; they are

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central to the search for sustainable global solutions. The essays in this anthology demonstrate that Africa's experiences, far from being exceptional or marginal, are vital to understanding the complexities of the global system.

As Dean of Research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, I am particularly proud to see scholars and practitioners contributing to global debates through rigorous, policy-relevant, and socially conscious research. This anthology affirms the role of African universities, think tanks, and civic institutions as key sites of knowledge production. It serves as a reminder that research grounded in local realities can illuminate global challenges and inspire innovative pathways forward.

I commend the editors and contributors for their commitment to intellectual excellence, critical inquiry, and civic engagement. Their collective effort has produced a body of work that not only informs but also inspires, challenging readers to think differently about power, partnership, and possibility in the twenty-first century. The G20 may have been conceived as a response to financial instability. Still, as this anthology demonstrates, its future relevance will depend on its ability to foster inclusivity, dialogue, and a shared sense of humanity.

The G20 in Focus is more than an anthology of essays; it is a statement of intent. It asserts that Africa's time is now, that the continent's ideas, innovations, and leadership are indispensable to building a more equitable world. It invites policymakers, scholars, and citizens alike to reimagine global governance as a collective enterprise grounded in justice, empathy, and cooperation.

As the world looks to the G20 for direction in addressing its most pressing challenges, this book stands as both a mirror and a guide. It reflects the realities of a changing global order while offering pathways for transformation. It reminds us that progress depends not on domination, but on dialogue; not on exclusion, but on engagement; and not on power alone, but on partnership.

I congratulate the Democracy Development Program (DDP) for initiating this important project and for its enduring commitment to advancing democracy and development in Africa. I also extend my appreciation to the editors for curating such a rich and timely collection of scholarship. Their work will undoubtedly contribute to deepening our understanding of Africa's role in shaping the global future.

The G20 in Focus

It is my sincere hope that *The G20 in Focus* will reach policymakers, researchers, and citizens across the continent and beyond, sparking new conversations and collaborations that strengthen Africa's voice in the world. May it serve as a lasting reminder that inclusive global governance is not only possible but essential for our shared future.

Professor Vivian B. Ojong, PhD.

Professor of Anthropology
Dean of Research
College of Humanities
University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)

Professor Vivian Besem Ojong is a distinguished professor of anthropology and an academic leader whose scholarship and leadership have significantly shaped the fields of gender studies, migration studies, and African cultural studies. She currently serves as the Dean of Research in the College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), South Africa, where she provides strategic leadership in advancing research excellence, interdisciplinary collaboration, and postgraduate development across the humanities disciplines.

Professor Ojong holds a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Anthropology from the University of Zululand, South Africa. Her academic journey reflects a lifelong commitment to understanding the complexities of African societies through anthropological and gendered lenses. Since joining the University of KwaZulu-Natal, she has consistently demonstrated scholarly growth and administrative competence, having served in various capacities, including Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, and Full Professor of Anthropology (since 2019).

Her research and teaching interests encompass a wide range of themes, including migration and diaspora studies, African feminism and gender dynamics, identity politics, culture and religion, and globalization in African contexts. Through her scholarship, Professor Ojong interrogates how gender, culture, and mobility intersect to shape human experiences and social transformations in contemporary Africa. She has published widely in these areas and remains committed to mentoring emerging scholars and promoting gender equity in academia.

Over the years, Professor Ojong has held several key administrative and academic leadership positions at UKZN. She

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previously served as the Dean and Head of the School of Social Sciences, where she led strategic initiatives to enhance academic performance, research productivity, and student success. Before that, she served as the Acting Head of the School of Anthropology, Gender, and Historical Studies (2008–2011), Academic Leader for various portfolios within the School of Social Sciences, and Acting Dean and Head of School from 2019 to 2021. Her leadership is characterised by innovation, inclusivity, and an enduring commitment to excellence and transformation within higher education.

Professor Ojong’s scholarly contributions include co-editing the volume *Researching the “New Normal” Social World: Methodological Adaptations and Innovations Post-Pandemic* (Taylor & Francis, 2023), which explores methodological shifts in social science research following the COVID-19 pandemic. She is also co-author of *Identity and Belonging: The African Others in South Africa* (2024), which examines questions of citizenship, migration, and belonging among African migrants in post-apartheid South Africa. In 2022, she delivered her inaugural lecture titled “*Territories in Flow and Flux: Anthropological Knowledge and Virtual Communities*,” highlighting how digital spaces and transnational mobility are reshaping contemporary anthropological inquiry.

Beyond academia, Professor Ojong is widely recognised for her mentorship of young scholars and her advocacy for women’s leadership in higher education. She continues to influence discourse on social transformation, identity, and inclusion through both her research and her academic stewardship. As Dean of Research in the College of Humanities, she plays a pivotal role in advancing the university’s vision of promoting world-class, socially responsive scholarship that makes meaningful contributions to African and global development.

Preface

The G20 is more than a gathering of the world's most powerful economies; it is a reflection of how nations, regions, and communities negotiate their place within an increasingly interdependent world. In this sense, *The G20 in Focus: An Anthology of African Analyses, Priorities, and Pathways* is a timely and vital moment to take stock, critique programming, and look to the future and new opportunities. The chapters included capture, clarify, and amplify African voices at a moment when the global order is shifting, and when the imperative for inclusion, cooperation, and shared responsibility has never been greater.

The intellectual depth, diversity of perspectives, and commitment to equity and justice that characterize the articles in this volume are a testament to the strengths of the authors and the continent they write about. Working within an African context, the authors move beyond merely describing global inequalities to articulating pathways for their transformation. They challenge us to rethink long-standing assumptions about development, governance, and representation, doing so with clarity, courage, and compassion for the people involved.

This volume arrives at a critical moment. The world continues to grapple with the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic volatility, technological disruption, and rising nationalism that threaten cooperation, while climate crises transcend increasingly complex borders. In this changing world, the G20 serves as both a platform for global cooperation and a mirror that reflects deep structural divides. Africa's participation, historically limited but increasingly assertive, signals an essential evolution in global governance. With South Africa's chairship and the African Union's inclusion as a permanent member of the G20, there is now an unprecedented opportunity to reshape the narrative and ensure that global policy reflects the realities and aspirations of all regions and all peoples.

With an emphasis on people, what distinguishes this anthology is its focus on *agency*. The contributors do not portray Africans as passive participants in a global system; rather, the authors focus on the dynamic ways African actors are shaping international discourse, demanding to be heard, and affirming their status as equal partners in ongoing development. Whether addressing issues of finance, gender,

digital transformation, or the moral dimensions of leadership, they demonstrate that Africa's insights are not peripheral; they are foundational to building a fairer global order.

The Democracy Development Program (DDP) deserves recognition for its role in facilitating this important work. Through its partnerships, including the sustained support of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), the DDP has fostered dialogue that welcomes new voices, thereby bridging academia, policy, and civil society. Such collaboration ensures that the people behind the ideas presented in this book are not forgotten. Here, the authors celebrate them, and in doing so, guarantee that their ideas are not confined to scholarly debate but instead shared and celebrated in the practical realities of governance, community development, and democratic participation.

Anthologies like this remind us that global challenges require diverse perspectives and that sustainable solutions emerge from listening to, working with, and engaging people on the ground, and always pushing for inclusive participation. *The G20 in Focus* captures Africa's growing and important voice in global governance. It demonstrates that this growth is necessary and transformative, as the authors together celebrate the lived experience, rich intellectual tradition, and vision for a shared humanity.

It is my honour to be a part of this important volume, a critical step in our growing dialogue. The essays collected here will challenge readers to think critically about power, partnership, and purpose. Most importantly, they will inspire us to imagine a G20 and a world that truly reflects the principles of justice, collaboration, and equality for all.

Professor Jeffrey H. Cohen, PhD.

Professor of Anthropology
The Ohio State University (OSU),
United States of America

Professor Jeffrey H. Cohen, PhD, is Professor of Anthropology at the Ohio State University (OSU), United States of America. Renowned for his research on migration, development, foodways, and transnationalism, his career bridges academic scholarship and community-engaged research across the Americas and beyond. His work has made a significant contribution to understanding how

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global socio-economic forces shape the lived experiences of migrant communities, particularly those originating from Mexico.

Professor Cohen earned his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Anthropology from Indiana University in 1994, following a Master's degree in Anthropology from the University of New Mexico and a Bachelor's degree from Indiana University. His academic trajectory reflects a sustained engagement with questions of culture, identity, and adaptation among marginalized and mobile populations. After completing his doctoral studies, he began his career at Texas A&M University (1994–1999) before joining Pennsylvania State University (2000–2005) as a faculty member in Anthropology and the Demography Program. In 2005, he joined The Ohio State University, where he was promoted to Full Professor in 2012.

At OSU, Professor Cohen's teaching and research focus on migration and transnationalism, food and nutrition, development and inequality, and research methodologies in a global context. He has conducted long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Oaxaca, Mexico, where his studies have explored the dynamics of migration to the United States, remittance economies, household strategies, and the impact of migration on family and community structures. His work provides insights into how rural and indigenous people maintain cultural continuity in the face of change.

Beyond migration, Professor Cohen's scholarship has made significant contributions to the study of foodways. He examines how traditional diets evolve in response to migration, economic pressures, and globalization. His latest book, *Eating Grasshoppers: Chapulines and the Women Who Sell Them* (University of Texas Press, 2025), investigates the cultural, nutritional, and economic significance of edible insects in Oaxacan markets, highlighting how women's labour and innovation sustain traditional food systems in a changing world.

Professor Cohen is the founder and director of the Transnational Research Laboratory at The Ohio State University. This collaborative research network involves students and scholars from around the world. Through this initiative, he promotes interdisciplinary and comparative research on themes such as remittances, inequality, health, and cultural resilience. His work has been supported by numerous prestigious grants and fellowships, including those from the National Science Foundation, the Fulbright Program, and the National Geographic Society.

He is an active contributor to both academic and public discourse. His publications appear in leading journals and edited volumes in the fields of anthropology and migration studies. He has authored and co-authored several influential books, including *“The Culture of Migration in Southern Mexico”* and *“Eating Soup Without a Spoon: Anthropological Theory and Method in the Real World.”* His accessible writing and global collaborations reflect his commitment to using anthropology as a tool for understanding human mobility, adaptation, and creativity.

Through his teaching, mentorship, and scholarship, Professor Jeffrey H. Cohen continues to inspire generations of anthropologists and students worldwide. His work exemplifies the power of ethnographic research to illuminate the connections between local cultures and global processes, demonstrating how human communities navigate change with resilience, innovation, and a sense of cultural pride.

Acknowledgement

The Democracy Development Program (DDP) would like to express its sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the realisation of this important anthology, *The G20 in Focus: An Anthology of African Analyses, Priorities, and Pathways*. This publication reflects the shared commitment of scholars, practitioners, and civic actors to amplifying African perspectives in global governance and ensuring that Africa's voice is both heard and valued in shaping the policies of the Group of Twenty (G20).

The DDP wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) for its continued support and partnership. Over the years, the KAS has been an invaluable ally in advancing the DDP's mission to strengthen democracy, promote civic participation, and deepen dialogue on governance and development in South Africa and across the continent. This publication stands as yet another testament to that enduring collaboration.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all contributors for their insightful analyses, research, and reflections, which form the backbone of this volume. Each chapter reflects a unique dimension of Africa's engagement with the G20, demonstrating the richness and diversity of African thought on issues ranging from economic resilience and gender equality to digital transformation and democratic participation.

Our gratitude goes to the editorial team for their dedication, professionalism, and intellectual rigour in curating and organizing the essays into a coherent and thought-provoking body of work. We also acknowledge the reviewers, advisors, and partners whose feedback and encouragement helped strengthen the quality and relevance of this publication.

We are particularly thankful to the DDP's leadership and staff for their vision and unwavering support in driving this initiative from conception to completion. This project builds on the DDP's longstanding commitment to fostering democratic values, civic participation, and inclusive governance in South Africa and across the African continent. By supporting this anthology, DDP reaffirms its belief that democracy is not only a national aspiration but also a global responsibility, one that must be shaped by inclusive dialogue and equitable representation.

Finally, we extend heartfelt appreciation to our partners, supporters, and readers. Your engagement ensures that the ideas captured in this book will not remain confined to its pages but will continue to inspire meaningful dialogue, policy innovation, and collaboration for a more just and participatory global order.

Democracy Development Program (DDP)

Durban, South Africa

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AU	African Union
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DDP	Democracy Development Program
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
G20	Group of Twenty
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UN	United Nations
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

Contributors

Paul Kariuki

Dr Paul Kariuki holds a Ph.D. in Administration (Public Administration) from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and is a Research Associate at Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa. He received a post-doctorate from the University of Airlangga, Indonesia. He is the Executive Director of the Democracy Development Program (DDP), a national not-for-profit organization and think tank based in Durban, South Africa. Moreover, he is a senior lecturer at the School of Management, IT, and Governance, UKZN. He is an alumnus of the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science, and Technology (CREST) at Stellenbosch University, where he received training in monitoring and evaluation. His research interests encompass governance, digital transformation, public participation, elections, electronic governance, local government, migration, cybersecurity, technology adoption, and monitoring and evaluation in the public sector. He has published research articles in peer-reviewed journals in these areas of interest and co-edited several books on various themes. Furthermore, he serves as a guest reviewer for several journals in Africa and abroad. Additionally, he is a regular contributor to various social and political issues in the mainstream electronic and print media in South Africa and abroad.

Sunday Israel Oyebamiji

Dr Sunday Israel Oyebamiji is a researcher and academic mentor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Durban, South Africa. His career is marked by a deep commitment to advancing knowledge within the national and transnational African context, fostering intellectual growth, and promoting human capital development. With his experience in teaching and learning, supervision, and research within the humanities and social sciences, he has significantly contributed to academic excellence in South Africa and beyond. Dr Oyebamiji received the prestigious Association of African Universities (AAU) Fellowship and the College of Humanities Postdoctoral Fellowship. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy degree in International Relations from UKZN and is pursuing a second PhD in International Studies at ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de

Lisboa, Portugal. His academic journey includes a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) and a Master's degree in History and Strategic Studies from the University of Lagos, Nigeria, which he earned in 2006 and 2010, respectively. Further enriching his expertise, he obtained certificates in Global Diplomacy and Moral Foundation of Politics from the University of London and Yale.

Temidayo Ofusori

Temidayo Ofusori is a Professional Engineer and a Lecturer in the field of Electrical, Electronics, and Computer Engineering at Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria. He is a Chartered Information Technology Practitioner, and his PhD research, conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, explores the deep learning detection of golden codes. His research interests include wireless communications, Internet of Things (IoT) Communications, Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs), and e-governance, among others.

Thelma Nyarhi

Ms Thelma Nyarhi is currently pursuing her PhD studies in Anthropology at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Additionally, she is a holder of an MSocSci in Anthropology from UCT. She has lectured on undergraduate courses in Anthropology and Sociology. As a trained anthropologist, she possesses the skills and qualities necessary for conducting research and analysis. With these skills, she has become a political commentator, researcher, and podcaster. Her research interests lie within migration, democracy, citizenship, identity, and belonging. She has authored multiple opinion pieces broadly on African sociopolitical and socioeconomic issues. Furthermore, she authored a book entitled "Running Ahead: Zimbabwean Women Navigating Precarity in Johannesburg." Her aspirations lie in pursuing a professional career that will sharpen her conceptual and practical thinking for the betterment of society.

Bongiwe Khumalo

Ms. Bongiwe Khumalo is a researcher and an educator with over 7 years of experience. She holds an undergraduate degree in Taxation and an Honours degree in Education with a focus on Leadership and Management. She is currently pursuing her Master's degree in

Educational Leadership and Management. Her research interests include civic education, women's empowerment, community development, leadership, and good governance. She is a regular author of opinion pieces published in several local and national newspapers.

Yolokazi Mfuto

Ms. Yolokazi Mfuto development practitioner and a political analyst who is passionate about the struggle against socio-economic, political and health challenges that affect young people. She holds a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Communication, History and Political Sciences, an honours degree in Political Sciences and International Relations both from the University of Fort Hare. She also has a certificate in Project Management and currently pursuing Master in Multidisciplinary Human Rights at the University of Pretoria.

She has worked with the University of Fort Hare as an assistant in the Student Affairs Division focusing on Student Governance and Development responsible for developing training programs for SRCs, Student forums and societies. and then worked with the United Nations Population Fund Agency in the Adolescent and Youth portfolio focusing on establishing relations with stakeholders and develop programs for Youth and Adolescents. And then worked at the Centre for Human Rights at the Pan African Parliament in the Committees Unit. Currently she consults with Democracy Development Program.

Yolokazi has published papers with national newspapers on Politics, governance, and development, provides political commentary and serve in youth focused boards across the continent.

Note from the Editors

This anthology, *The G20 in Focus: An Anthology of African Analyses, Priorities, and Pathways*, is the product of a collaborative effort facilitated under the auspices of the Democracy Development Program (DDP). Conceived at a moment when South Africa assumed the chairship of the G20 and the African Union was admitted as a permanent member; the project responds to the urgent need to amplify African perspectives in one of the world's most powerful global governance forums.

The Democracy Development Program (DDP) has long been committed to strengthening democracy, civic participation, and inclusive governance in South Africa and beyond. The G20 project aligns perfectly with this mission, as it offers a platform for scholars, practitioners, and civil society voices to engage with pressing global governance issues from an African perspective. The essays collected here explore themes ranging from global financing and resilience to gender justice, digital transformation, and the complex role of South Africa within the G20.

As editors, our aim has been to curate diverse voices and perspectives that reflect the multiplicity of Africa's experiences, priorities, and aspirations. This volume is not only a scholarly contribution but also a political and civic intervention, intended to broaden debates about the G20 and ensure that they resonate with African realities. The contributions demonstrate that Africa is not merely a recipient of global policies but a producer of knowledge and a driver of global transformation.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the contributors, whose rigorous analyses and critical reflections have made this anthology possible. We also acknowledge the Democracy Development Program (DDP) for its leadership in initiating and supporting this project, and for providing an institutional home for the important conversations that informed these chapters. Finally, we are deeply indebted to the broader community of scholars, policymakers, and citizens who continue to advocate for inclusive, just, and accountable global governance.

We hope that this anthology will serve as both a resource and an inspiration, sparking further dialogue, scholarship, and advocacy that place Africa firmly at the centre of global decision-

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making processes. In doing so, we aspire to contribute not only to the vibrancy of democratic discourse but also to shaping a more equitable global order.

The Editors

Sunday Israel Oyebamiji, PhD. & Paul Kariuki, PhD.

Introduction

Sunday Israel Oyebamiji and Paul Kariuki

The Group of Twenty (G20) has, since its inception in 1999, emerged as one of the most significant forums for international cooperation on economic and political issues. Initially conceived as a mechanism to stabilize financial markets after the turbulence of the late 1990s, the G20 has evolved into the premier forum for global governance, shaping decisions that affect not only its members but the world at large. Today, it represents nearly 80 percent of global GDP, three-quarters of world trade, and two-thirds of the global population. Over time, the G20's agenda has expanded far beyond finance, encompassing pressing concerns such as climate change, digital transformation, sustainable development, food security, gender equality, and global health. It is no longer merely a technocratic gathering of finance ministers but a political and moral arena where questions of equity, justice, and sustainability are debated alongside macroeconomic strategies.

Yet the G20 is also a contested institution. Its legitimacy has often been questioned because of its exclusivity: while it claims to represent the world, only a small number of states hold membership. This imbalance has perpetuated a system in which the voices of developing regions, especially Africa, are marginalized. For most of its history, South Africa was the sole African member of the G20, bearing the impossible responsibility of representing the entire continent's diverse realities and priorities. The recent admission of the African Union as a permanent member of the G20 marks a significant milestone in addressing this imbalance, but the challenge of integrating African perspectives into decision-making processes remains substantial.

It is against this backdrop that *The G20 in Focus: An Anthology of African Analyses, Priorities, and Pathways* is positioned. The anthology gathers African voices at a critical moment when the continent's role in global governance is under the spotlight. Africa is paradoxical in its global standing. It is a continent endowed with extraordinary resources, youthful demographics, growing urban markets, and rising geopolitical significance. At the same time, it faces challenges of debt, inequality, unemployment, fragile institutions, and climate vulnerability. These contradictions make Africa both indispensable

to global development and disproportionately affected by the failures of international governance. By foregrounding African perspectives, this anthology insists that global debates cannot afford to sideline the continent.

The purpose of this book is threefold. First, it aims to place African scholarship and analysis at the centre of conversations that are typically dominated by the perspectives of advanced economies. This is not simply a matter of representation but of justice: Africa contributes ideas, innovations, and solutions that deserve recognition on the world stage. Second, it interrogates South Africa's role as both a national actor and a continental representative within the G20, exploring how Pretoria balances its domestic imperatives with the broader responsibility of articulating Africa's priorities. Ultimately, the anthology proposes alternative pathways and reforms for the G20, emphasizing that unless the forum adopts principles of equity, inclusivity, and sustainability, it risks irrelevance in a multipolar world.

The contributions to this book are organized into four thematic sections, each reflecting a critical area of Africa's engagement with the G20. The first theme, "Financing, Economy, and Global Resilience," situates Africa within the turbulence of global economic governance. In these chapters, the contributors examine the financing-for-development gap. This debt distress plagues many low-income countries, characterized by an uneven pace of recovery from crises and the structural inequalities that the current global financial architecture perpetuates. These analyses do more than highlight challenges: they map possible reforms in debt restructuring, climate finance, and domestic resource mobilization, while underscoring the G20's potential role in coordinating systemic change.

The second theme, "Gender, Labour, and Social Inclusion," moves the focus from financial systems to the lived realities of ordinary people. Here, the spotlight falls on gender inequality, the gender wage gap, labour participation, and the persistent exclusion of marginalized voices from policymaking. The contributors argue that without addressing these social dimensions, economic growth will remain shallow and exclusionary. Civil society, they emphasize, plays a catalytic role in bridging the gap between governments and citizens. South Africa's 2025 chairship of the G20 is highlighted as a moment when citizen voices could be amplified, linking local realities with global policy frameworks. These chapters remind us

that governance is not only about macroeconomic indicators but also about justice, dignity, and participation.

The third theme, “Digital Transformation and Knowledge Systems,” reflects one of the most pressing areas of global governance in the twenty-first century. Digital transformation promises economic growth and innovation, but also introduces threats of cybersecurity vulnerabilities, regulatory uncertainty, and deepening inequalities. South Africa’s digital journey, marked by reforms in telecommunications, the rise of fintech, and the expansion of e-commerce, is analysed as both a challenge and an opportunity. Equally significant is the call to integrate African indigenous knowledge systems into global debates. For too long, Western paradigms have dominated policy frameworks, overshadowing Africa’s contributions in agriculture, medicine, governance, and sustainability. By amplifying African knowledge systems, these chapters demand not only technological inclusion but also epistemic justice.

The fourth and final theme, “South Africa’s Role and Leadership in the G20,” examines how the continent’s sole permanent member, and now a partner to the African Union in G20 deliberations, navigates its complex role. South Africa’s participation is not just about government negotiations; it also involves think tanks, intellectuals, and faith-based organizations that bring diverse perspectives into the policy space. These chapters trace the interplay between domestic priorities, continental solidarity, and global responsibilities, highlighting the opportunities and tensions inherent in South Africa’s leadership.

Across all four themes, several common threads emerge. One is the insistence on equity and inclusion: whether in financial reforms, labour markets, digital governance, or policymaking, the contributors emphasize that the G20 must place justice at the heart of its agenda. Another is the assertion of Africa’s agency: this anthology refuses to depict Africa as a passive recipient of global decisions, instead highlighting its role as a knowledge producer, policy innovator, and strategic actor. A third theme is the recognition of South Africa’s dual role: as both a national stakeholder with its own domestic challenges and as a continental representative tasked with articulating Africa’s collective aspirations. Ultimately, the anthology highlights the need for reform within the G20 itself. Without structural transformation, whether in its composition, agenda, or processes, the forum risks reinforcing the very inequalities it claims to address.

The G20 in Focus

This book makes significant contributions to multiple domains of scholarship and practice. For international relations, it challenges the Eurocentrism that pervades mainstream theories of global governance. For development studies, it offers critical insights into financing, resilience, gender justice, and digital inclusion, issues that are central to Africa's development trajectory. For policymakers, it provides concrete recommendations for engaging the G20 in ways that advance African interests while contributing to global public goods.

At a time when South Africa holds the G20 chairship and the African Union has secured a permanent seat at the table, the questions raised in this anthology are especially urgent. The world faces overlapping crises, including economic stagnation, climate breakdown, geopolitical fragmentation, and digital disruption. The G20's relevance will depend on its ability to respond inclusively and effectively. Africa cannot afford to be silent in these debates, nor can the world afford to exclude Africa's perspectives.

The G20 in Focus: An Anthology of African Analyses, Priorities, and Pathways is therefore more than a collection of essays. It is a call to action. It invites scholars, policymakers, and citizens alike to imagine a G20 that is not only representative but also transformative; not only powerful but also just. It insists that global governance must reflect the aspirations of all humanity, not only the privileged few. By amplifying African voices, this book contributes to the broader project of reimagining international cooperation in a multipolar, interconnected, and fragile world.

In reclaiming space for African perspectives in one of the world's most influential forums, the anthology underscores a simple but profound truth: global challenges demand global solutions, and these solutions must be inclusive, equitable, and informed by the diverse experiences of all regions. The G20's capacity to shape the twenty-first century will depend not only on its economic power but also on its willingness to listen, to learn, and to lead with justice.

Chapter One

Financing, Economy, and Global Resilience

Financing for Development at Crossroads amid Global economic and Political Instability: The Role of the G-20

Temidayo Ofusori

The global landscape in 2025 is marked by unprecedented economic and political instability, posing significant challenges to financing for development (FfD). Developing nations face mounting debt burdens, climate vulnerabilities, and structural inequalities, while global economic growth remains sluggish amid trade tensions, geopolitical conflicts, and the lingering effects of recent crises. The G-20, as a forum representing the world's largest economies, stands at a critical juncture to steer international cooperation toward sustainable and inclusive development. This write-up examines the key issues at stake, the necessary reforms, the G-20's role in addressing these challenges and provides policy recommendations for policymakers.

The Stakes

The stakes for financing for development are immense, as failure to mobilize adequate resources threatens global stability, exacerbates poverty, and undermines progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Developing countries face a very large financing gap that makes it quite difficult to achieve the SDGs by 2030, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (D'Souza and Jain, 2022). This gap is widened by several interconnected crises:

Debt Distress: A high percentage of low-income countries are at high risk of debt distress or already in default, with external debt servicing consuming so much of government revenues in some cases

(Griffiths et al., 2020). Rising interest rates and a strong U.S. dollar exacerbate repayment challenges, diverting funds from critical sectors like health, education, and infrastructure.

Climate Crisis: Developing nations, despite contributing minimally to global emissions, face disproportionate climate impacts (Odeku, 2022). The cost of adaptation and mitigation is extremely high, yet current climate finance flows remain inadequate, with only \$100 billion pledged annually under the Paris Agreement, often delivered as loans rather than grants (Sachs, 2019).

Economic Inequality: Global economic recovery is uneven, with advanced economies tightening monetary policies while developing nations grapple with inflation, currency depreciation, and capital flight (YOGANANDHAM, 2024). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts global growth at just 3.2% in 2025, which is insufficient to address unemployment and poverty in the Global South (Gern et al., 2024).

Geopolitical Tensions: Ongoing conflicts, trade wars, and sanctions disrupt supply chains, increase commodity prices, and limit access to markets and finance (Rasshyvalov et al., 2024). These tensions erode trust in multilateral institutions, hindering coordinated responses to global challenges.

Failure to address these issues risks perpetuating a cycle of poverty, instability, and environmental degradation, with ripple effects on global security and prosperity. The G-20, representing 80% of global GDP, has a unique responsibility to bridge these gaps and foster inclusive growth.

Necessary Reforms

To address the financing for development crisis, systemic reforms are necessary across the global financial architecture, debt management, climate finance, and domestic resource mobilization. Key reforms include:

Reforming the Global Financial Architecture

The global financial system, primarily governed by institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, faces criticism for its lack of representation and inflexibility in addressing the needs of developing countries. To address these

shortcomings, reforms are essential. One key reform involves enhancing representation by increasing the voting power of developing countries in the IMF and World Bank to better reflect their economic contributions and population size, as the current quota system disproportionately favours advanced economies, undermining the legitimacy of these institutions (Muhumed and Gaas, 2016). Additionally, Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) must significantly scale up their lending capacity, as recommended by the Independent Expert Group on MDB Reform (Zhuo, 2024). Achieving this requires capital increases, the adoption of innovative financing instruments, and greater utilization of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) (Cashman et al., 2022). Furthermore, promoting inclusive standards is critical, which entails revising credit rating methodologies to prioritize long-term development goals over short-term fiscal metrics that often penalize developing nations with higher borrowing costs.

Debt Restructuring and Relief

The G-20's Common Framework for Debt Treatments, designed to address debt distress in low-income countries, has been criticized for its slow progress and limited scope, assisting only a small fraction of affected nations. To improve its effectiveness, comprehensive reforms are needed. One priority is expanding eligibility for debt relief to include middle-income countries and mandating the participation of private creditors (Cashman et al., 2022). Another innovative approach is the implementation of debt-for-development swaps, which would convert debt repayments into investments aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as education or renewable energy projects, thereby aligning the interests of creditors and debtors (Ahmad et al., 2024). Additionally, introducing automatic debt suspension mechanisms would provide immediate fiscal relief by pausing debt repayments during crises, such as natural disasters, allowing governments to redirect resources to urgent needs.

Scaling Up Climate Finance

Climate finance must undergo significant restructuring to prioritize accessibility for vulnerable nations and favour grants over loans, which often exacerbate debt burdens. Key actions are necessary to achieve this. First, advanced economies must not only meet but exceed the \$100 billion annual climate finance pledge established under the Paris Agreement, with a proposed new target of \$500

billion by 2030, as discussed at COP29 (O’Callaghan, 2024). Second, the Loss and Damage Fund, aimed at supporting countries most affected by climate impacts, must be fully operationalized and scaled to \$100 billion annually, with contributions allocated based on historical emissions to ensure fairness. Finally, engaging the private sector is crucial, which can be achieved by developing blended finance models that leverage private capital for green infrastructure projects, supported by public guarantees and risk-sharing mechanisms to reduce investment risks and attract funding (Shames and Scherr, 2020).

Strengthening Domestic Resource Mobilization

Developing countries face significant revenue losses, estimated at \$400 billion annually, due to illicit financial flows and tax evasion, as reported by the OECD (Brandt, 2023). To address this, reforms are needed to enhance domestic resource mobilization. A critical step is implementing a UN-led global tax convention to curb profit shifting and eliminate tax havens, ensuring that multinational corporations pay fair taxes in the countries where they operate. Additionally, introducing standardized digital service taxes would enable governments to capture revenue from tech giants, with the proceeds redistributed to developing nations to support development priorities. Furthermore, capacity building is essential to strengthen tax administration systems, with the goal of achieving a tax-to-GDP ratio of at least 20% in low-income countries, thereby improving revenue collection and reducing reliance on external financing (Benitez et al., 2023).

The Role of the G-20

The G-20 is uniquely positioned to drive these reforms due to its economic weight, political influence, and ability to coordinate among major creditors and donors. Its role spans agenda-setting, policy coordination, and resource mobilization.

Agenda-Setting and Leadership

The G-20 has a pivotal role in shaping global priorities by placing Financing for Development (FfD) at the forefront of its summits. Through its Development Working Group, the G-20 can drive transformative agendas that address pressing global challenges.

One key focus should be championing a global compact to close the financing gap for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), integrating FfD into broader economic recovery plans to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth. Additionally, the G-20 should promote integrated strategies that align climate finance with development objectives, emphasizing co-benefits such as job creation and improved energy access, thereby fostering synergies between environmental sustainability and economic progress.

Policy Coordination

As a unique forum that brings together advanced and emerging economies, the G-20 is well-positioned to bridge divides and foster consensus on complex and contentious issues. In the realm of debt coordination, the G-20 can strengthen the Common Framework for Debt Treatments by enforcing participation from all creditors, including private creditors and major bilateral lenders like China, while establishing clear timelines for debt resolution to expedite relief for distressed nations. Furthermore, the G-20 should lead negotiations on critical financial reforms, such as revising IMF quotas and increasing capital for Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), to ensure equitable representation and resource allocation. Additionally, promoting fair trade policies and foreign direct investment (FDI) in developing countries by reducing barriers to market access and facilitating technology transfer can enhance economic opportunities and resilience in the Global South.

Resource Mobilization

The G-20 can play a catalytic role in mobilizing resources for development through direct commitments and innovative financing mechanisms. One critical action is to channel the \$650 billion in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) issued in 2021 to vulnerable countries, with G-20 members committing to reallocate some percentage of their SDR holdings to support those most in need (Zattler, 2024). As countries responsible for 75% of global emissions, G-20 members should also lead by example in climate finance, doubling their contributions and mobilizing private capital to support green initiatives. Moreover, fostering South-South cooperation is essential, with emerging G-20 economies, such as India, Brazil, and South

Africa, encouraged to share expertise, technology, and resources with other developing nations to promote mutual growth and resilience.

Monitoring and Accountability

To enhance accountability and ensure the fulfilment of FfD commitments, the G-20 must establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. One effective approach is to create a public dashboard that tracks progress on pledges related to debt relief, climate finance, and SDG investments, providing transparency and enabling stakeholders to hold members accountable. Additionally, conducting regular peer reviews of G-20 members' contributions to global public goods can foster transparency and encourage adherence to commitments through peer pressure, ensuring that the G-20 remains a credible and effective leader in global development efforts.

Policy Recommendations

To translate these roles into action, policymakers should consider the following recommendations:

Launch a G-20 FfD Compact: At the 2025 G-20 Summit, adopt a comprehensive FfD Compact that commits members to mobilize \$1 trillion annually for SDGs through grants, concessional loans, and private capital. The compact should include time-bound targets for debt relief, climate finance, and tax reforms.

Establish a Global Debt Authority: Create a neutral, UN-backed institution under G-20 oversight to coordinate debt restructuring, enforce creditor participation, and prioritize debtor countries' development needs. This authority could pilot debt-for-climate swaps in 10 countries by 2027.

Scale Climate Finance with Equity: G-20 members should commit to a \$500 billion annual climate finance goal, with at least 50% allocated as grants and a percentage dedicated to adaptation and loss and damage. A G-20 task force should develop standardized criteria for climate finance disbursements, prioritizing least developed countries (LDCs).

Promote a Global Tax Framework: Endorse a UN-led global tax convention by 2026, focusing on minimum corporate tax rates, digital taxation, and anti-avoidance measures. G-20 countries

should lead by implementing these standards domestically and supporting capacity building in developing nations.

Enhance MDB Effectiveness: G-20 finance ministers should endorse a \$500 billion capital increase for MDBs, coupled with reforms to streamline lending processes and prioritize high-impact projects. A G-20-led review should assess the performance of MDBs annually.

Foster Inclusive Digital Financing: Support the development of digital financial infrastructure in developing countries, including mobile banking and blockchain-based payment systems, to improve access to finance and reduce transaction costs. G-20 members should fund pilot projects in 20 countries by 2028.

Conclusion

Financing for development stands at a critical juncture, with global economic and political instability posing a significant threat to progress toward inclusive and sustainable growth. The G-20, as a steward of global economic governance, has a pivotal role in addressing these challenges through leadership, coordination, and resource mobilization. By championing reforms in the global financial architecture, debt management, climate finance, and domestic resource mobilization, the G-20 can close the financing gap and foster resilience in developing nations. The proposed policy recommendations offer a roadmap for action, emphasizing equity, accountability, and innovation. As the world navigates this critical juncture, the G-20's commitment to collective action will determine whether the promise of the SDGs is fulfilled or deferred.

Global Economic Recovery and Resilience in a shock-prone system: Challenges and Opportunities for the G20

Thelma Nyarhi

The advancement of globalization has led to an increase in network flows. This can be seen in the rise and expansion of trade blocs and alliances. These networks have since encouraged state interdependence and subsequently impacted their domestic economies. Whether informational, physical, or financial, these network flows contribute to the global economy. The Group 20 (G20) is one such example that can showcase the network flows and their impact on the global economy. As a group comprising the world's largest economies, it has a huge responsibility to address global economic and environmental issues. The global economy, as an interconnected entity, has experienced tumultuous times since the Great Depression. Faced with multiple crises and geopolitical uncertainty, states have, in response, sought cost-effective survival methods that expedite recovery processes. This has subsequently contributed to sustainable economic resilience and facilitated faster recovery. Some of these conversations aim to explain the phenomenon of economic cycles and the consequent state responses that populate public discourse.

“While destinations seek to rebuild and recover, taking into consideration community aspirations, the pace and scale of transformation can often have ramifications in terms of economic, social, and environmental costs incurred” (Tham and Prayag, 2024: 277). In the context of crisis and uncertainty, not all states have equal capacity to recover simultaneously. Conversely, this leads to diverse approaches to economic resilience and recovery attempts, which may either favour unilateralism or multilateralism. As a group focused on global integration, the former approach presents challenges for the G20, as it contradicts the group's ideology. This becomes increasingly arduous in instances where such contrasting beliefs are among the group members.

With the rising anti-migration and protectionism public discourses, the inception of the Trump Administration has nudged a series of debates on concerns about global economic recovery

and resilience. Is global economic integration the answer? Should states still resort to multilateralism in this shock-prone world that is plagued with crises? According to Eichengreen, Park and Shin (2024), economic resilience and recovery are essential in a shock-prone world. Economic resilience, although difficult to explain in the context of global and local economies it can be attributed to the ability of economies to return to 'normalcy' after a negative shock – 'either to return to a pre-existing stable or equilibrium state or to move quickly to a new one' (Simmie and Martin, 2010: 27). Economic recovery contrastingly, measures how long it takes to return to normalcy. While technology, infrastructural development, and public policy have played a significant role in shaping the pace of global economic integration (Mussa, 2000), other independent factors are at play.

In a world where socioeconomic, cultural, and political shifts have resulted from globalisation, it is no surprise that some nations have opted for decoupling and friendshoring as a means of sustaining economic resilience. Extraordinary shocks and events have prompted particular local and global responses, particularly in relation to public policy. Some of these responses have included the halting of aid; alliance formations amongst friendly states with an economic potential; antimigration policies, and withdrawal from long-standing regional agreements. According to Vale and Campanella (2005), the forms and mechanisms of resilience, as well as the scale and scope of the state response, depend on the source of the disaster. In the hopes of recovery and resilience, some nations have grappled with the idea of considering a deglobalized initiative. In the hope of mitigating shocks, decoupling and friendshoring have become some of the common economic resilience strategies.

Deglobalizing and Resilience

The Great Depression of 2008, COVID-19 lockdowns, and geopolitical tensions, such as the Russia-Ukraine trade impacts, have since nudged the debate around deglobalization. These pressures have led to decoupling, which refers to the reduction of economic interdependency between trading partners (Nguyen, 2024). A good example is the economic relationship between the United States of America (USA) and China. While both are members of the G20, they have contrasting agendas driven by competition. USA played a huge role in China's economic rise due to its heavy investments

in the Chinese manufacturing industry. In turn USA was a major product destination. The Chinese economic rise and technological advancements posed concerns over their potential impact on the USA. Under Donald Trump's administration campaign in 2015, decoupling efforts gained momentum as concerns grew around national security. Over the years, the USA has made additional decisions, all seemingly geared towards unilateralism and potential deglobalization.

Recently, the decisions by the United States of America (USA) to pull out from the World Health Organization, the Paris Agreement, halt aid, and impose trade barriers have had significant effects on the global economy. Additionally, the USA has also revoked the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) with South Africa, Indonesia, and Vietnam, aimed at decarbonization commitments. The JETP was seen as an opportunity for skills development and electrification. It also contributed to global integration. As a country affected by electrical shortages and largely dependent on electricity generated by coal, the withdrawal of the USA serves as a reminder to the world that sustainability remains a precarious exercise. Most countries, including South Africa, are already plagued with unemployment and poverty. Opportunities geared towards alleviating these pressures are essential; however, the constant changes brought about by geopolitical tensions, political will, crises, and disasters, among others, have contributed to significant economic shockwaves. These economic shocks either paralyze or slow down economic development. The USA's withdrawals from funding have broader implications for economic stability. Many global development programs were dependent on USAID funding. Disruptions of these programs led to many job losses. Although there are notable economic uncertainties, modern capitalism still finds ways to exploit the situation. In the USA example, we see how foreign policy shifts have come to prioritize domestic policy over global affairs. While efforts have been centred around social and economic recovery and possible resilience, these shifts are in favour of unilateralist ideals.

An alternative approach - Collective Resilience

Despite this, however, the G20 South African Presidency is still committed to a collaborative exercise that reaffirms the values of justice and solidarity. Although the Trump administration's imposition of tariffs, trade barriers, and rescinded aid introduces significant challenges, instead of lamenting the negative impacts, this

period serves as an opportunity for reconceptualized transformative strategies. This may take a more decentralized approach that reduces the dependency on a single state. This can be observed in the instances of ‘friend-shoring’ that have come into effect. Friendshoring refers to the strategic and purposeful alignment or realignment of geopolitical interests with trading partners (Kalvelage and Tups, 2024). It draws on the idea of countries sourcing economic inputs from countries with similar values. These friendly ties among states necessitate peace and allow for the enhancement and sharing of knowledge, fostering stronger trade partnerships. This, in turn, reduces economic vulnerabilities and contributes to a shared economic resilience. Recently, geopolitics has largely influenced the spatial organisation of global production networks (GPNs). The overlapping impacts of crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, have led to the reconfiguration of these GPNs.

The Ukraine war, for example, has led to a polarised response, with some countries supporting Ukraine and others supporting Russia. This global divide has necessitated new geographies shaped around GPNs to surface. In the Russia-Ukraine example, Germany had considered rejecting natural gas imports from Russia and opted instead to produce green hydrogen from other countries, such as Namibia. Additionally, in an effort to reduce overreliance on the USA soyabean import, China also sought out alternatives through friendshoring (Oyebamiji, Ashe & Kiyala 2024). As the largest soyabean consumer and importer of soyabeans, the USA and Brazil had been the sources of exports. This caused overreliance on the two countries, which put China in a vulnerable position. As a result, China has shifted from soyabean producers based in Latin America and considers Tanzania as a primary producer of this commodity. Essentially, China has, through its friendly ties, sought an alternative supply chain for its soyabean needs.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Despite the various crises and uncertainties plaguing local and global economies, nations have sought ways of either recovery or resilience. While some states may recover faster than others, states still find ways of remaining economically resilient. Recently, this has included decoupling and friendshoring. Decoupling feeds off the idea of deglobality as a means to survive economic shocks, whereas friendshoring draws on strategic alignment with states with

economic potential. The two, while contrastingly different, serve as desperate means of weathering the shockwaves. The danger, however, for friendshoring is its likely ability to coerce and weaponize interdependent allies for strategic advantages. Although the G20 is centred around the ideals of solidarity, inclusion, and equality, these economic resilience strategies, despite seemingly being geared towards future economic recovery enhancement, still pose concerns. Friendshoring, although built on the idea of collective resilience, may not always serve the host countries' needs. It is with this that the G20 should encourage effective friendshoring, which emphasizes:

- **Diversification** – in order to avoid future decoupling, which may lead to economic fragmentation and potential geopolitical tensions.
- **Collaborative policies** – in order to ensure mutual developments and standardized regulations, thereby reducing bureaucratic issues and subsequent supply chain interruptions.
- **Infrastructural development** – in the host countries for an enhanced supply chain capability.

Chapter Two

Gender, Labour, and Social Inclusion

Promoting Gender Equality in Labour Markets in Africa and the Role of G-20 Member States

Thelma Nyarhi

Gender inequality is a multifaceted issue with far-reaching consequences that require comprehensive and sustainable efforts geared towards addressing the root causes. This may call for sustainable development, which comes from the understanding of satisfying the present needs of the people without compromising future generations. Although it has many meanings considering the varying disciplinary approaches and cultural backgrounds shaping understanding (Hopwood, Mellor & O'Brien, 2005), it has nudged several conversations relating to human rights. It calls for concerted efforts towards inclusive engagement and hopes for resilient and sustainable futures for all global citizens. As a concept, it also offers an understanding of the interrelations of humankind with economic, social, and political spheres. Sustainable development is multidimensional and layered with a level of complexity and uncertainty, therefore requiring a deep analysis. Globally, it has been interpreted using the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These have been seen as a step towards sustainability and resilience. As part of the 2030 Agenda^[1], these SDGs have been accepted and adopted by several world leaders who are members of the United Nations (UN). Furthermore, the G-20 has also made it its mandate to implement these SDGs. South Africa's Presidency in the G-20, although existing within an opportune moment of addressing varying global issues at the forefront, is plagued by the staggering SDG issues.

What do the SDGs show?

In tracking the progress of these goals, however, there has been growing concerns about reaching the SDG targets. So far, only 16% of the targets are on track and are likely to be met by 2030. The remaining 84% however, are either showing limited or a reversal in progress (Sustainable Development Report (SDR), 2024). SDG 5, which focuses on “Gender Equality”, is no exception, with progress also being limited. To measure the varying progress across the 17 SDGs, sustainability indicators are used. “These collectively help to guide actions for global development and shape visions for the future” (Estoque, 2020). The SDG Indicators’ main function is to trace, recognise, announce, determine, inform and estimate the implementation of the goal. On a global scale, SDG efforts are monitored by the UN Statistical Commission. Additionally, the commission also oversees the UN Statistics Division. The UN Statistics Division, in turn, is responsible for maintaining the Global SDG Indicators Database (Estoque, 2020). Considering sustainable development has varying understandings, the need for indicators of sustainability has continued growing rapidly as they serve to inform national and international decision-making systems (Gallopín, 1996).

Although Gender Equality has SDG indicators which span across family planning, education, access to opportunities, and labour-related issues, this article will engage with two of the SDG indicators for Gender Equality, that is: (i) *Ration of female-to-male labour force participation rate* and (ii) *gender wage gap*. These two indicators will offer a more comprehensive illustration of gender equality within the global labour market. The objective of SDG 5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Furthermore, SDG 8 “Decent Work and Economic Work” also seeks to provide data relating to the average hourly earnings of women and men employees. According to the SDR (2024), SDG 5 “Gender Equality” has been achieved for the most part globally. Challenges, however, ranging from significant to major, remain a concern in the greater parts of the Middle East and North Africa (2024) *see fig. 1*. This is shown by *the ratio of female-to-male labour force participation* SDG indicator. Despite this significant attribute there is still a gender equality disparity within the gender wage.

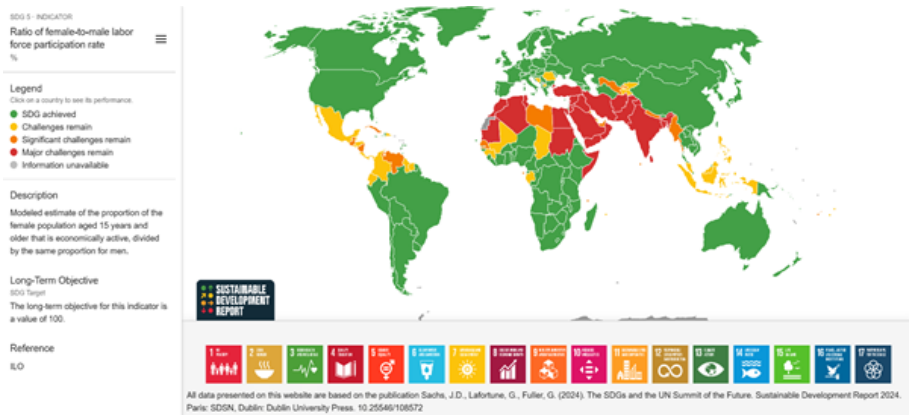


Figure 1: Map showing the SDG 5 Ratio of female-to-male labour force participation rate progress in 2024[2]

Although there may be various policies and efforts geared towards addressing gender disparities in the labour market through education and skills, challenges remain widespread particularly in the developing world (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2019). According to the ILO – a member of the IMF, their database showcases that of the 180 countries enlisted, men and women each constitute roughly half of the population. However, this parity is not reflected in the labour market. Despite the somewhat equal demographics, men seem to constitute a higher portion of the employment pool, leaving women susceptible to either precarious work or unemployment. Additionally, men seem to earn more than women within the same industries and education levels. Africa offers a vivid illustration of these disparities.

In the North Africa and Middle East regions, for example, the labour market participation of women compared to men within the region has been lower compared to other regions in the world. Despite the long-term objective for this SDG target being a value of 100, there are countries like Senegal, Mauritania, Iran and Saudi Arabia that have percentage ratio's that fall below 50 (see Fig. 2). These countries show either stagnating or decreasing trends in achieving the SDG target by 2030. Additionally, the gender wage gap indicator also serves as a serious sign of the ongoing struggles for gender equality. Gender wage gap has persisted for generations, with no country being able to completely eradicate it. According to the UN Women (2023) report 'Why Women Earn Less?', women earn approximately 21% less than men in the Southern and East regions of

Africa, with noticeable variations across countries. The gap is said to exist even after accounting for the education levels, type of job, work experience, and levels of seniority. Women continue to earn less. In a world plagued by poverty and hunger, the persistent income inequalities between women and men make women susceptible to generational poverty. Why then do women earn less?

The Struggles of Women

There has been a growing push for gender equality in employment. However, it is one of the greatest development challenges, especially in Africa. A myriad of reasons explain the reasons behind women earning less. According to the Gender Pay Gap Report (2023:6), “although a large portion of the gender pay gap can be explained by key individual characteristics – most notably educational level and work experience – and job characteristics, a substantial part remains unexplained. The unexplained part of the gender pay gap is often thought to result from discrimination”. Societal norms inform the grounds for discrimination, especially for those rooted in patriarchal systems that purposefully infringe on a woman’s right to exist as an equal being. This can be seen in the distribution of roles, which often finds women in subservient roles such as housework and care work in families with no prospects of access to formal education or opportunities outside the home. In the modern day, this has translated to the working environment, with women still earning less or having subservient roles in the workplace. This vulnerability of women is more likely to also affect the faring of childcare, thereby adding another layer of complexity. As primary caregivers, their vulnerability is compounded. This has prompted not only a greater need for transparency relating to gender equity scales employed by organisations, but also conversations relating to gender equity and equality. While the matter calls on the recognition of the vulnerability and susceptibility of women, girls, and children to poverty, currently, there is also added vulnerability for women who choose to migrate to other countries in search of greener pastures.

Following the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, the growing phenomenon and desperation to return to business-as-usual presented a false misconception of access (Sichone, 2022: 74-75). For women, access is spun into the sociopolitical, sociocultural and socioeconomic institutions. Access, as we have seen above, is not equally distributed and attainable. The growing unemployment

rates have forced some women to migrate, and although access to the labour market may be limited or denied, these women, with the added layer of vulnerability of being migrants, continue to find themselves operating within the economy's fringes in a quest to survive. They continue to have access to other forms of employment, which may range between either formalized or informalized work (Moghadam, 2005:111). Although conditions in these kinds of work may present challenges, such as gender-based violence, they soar through in their quest to survive.

Recommendations and Conclusion

While reasons for gender pay disparity involve complex issues influenced by various factors such as education backgrounds, patriarchal societal norms, and discrimination, a multistakeholder approach involving governments, civil society and institutions alike is needed. This is where the G-20 comes in. As a global intergovernmental forum, it has the capacity to influence global economies and government policies. With the 2030 Agenda already underway, achievements of the SDG's have been slowed down in some parts of the world. It is in these parts that the G-20 ought to focus on, especially relating to encouraging social protection policies that set up minimum wages, for example. This could be necessitated by setting up and sharing global targets. For example, aiming to reach a particular target for the employment of women in the workforce. Additionally, the G-20 should encourage social policy geared towards gender balance through recognising women's unpaid care work as this emphasizes some of the troubling societal norms that infringe on women rights. Women must also be encouraged to utilize their skills. This could be through broadening investment opportunities that can support the entrepreneur projects and help elevate women's capital standing.

In conclusion, the closing of the gender pay gap remains an important initiative in addressing labour-market related gender inequalities. It is highly important especially considering women form just over a half of the world's population. Although there may be many reasons accounting for the gender disparity, the implementation of the SDG framework is very important. In furthering the SDG targets, responsibility should not only fall on the governments but institutions, blocs, intergovernmental forums like the G-20 and civil society should hold governments accountable in

their SDG mandate. The labour-market is only a reflection of the dominant societal norms shaping a country and as such requires this multistakeholder approach to eradicating gender inequality.

Role of Civil Society in the G20: Civil Society as a Catalyst for Inclusive G20 Policies

Sunday Israel Oyebamiji

The Group of Twenty (G20) is a premier forum for international economic cooperation, bringing together the world's major economies to discuss and address global challenges. Established in 1999, the G20 initially focused on financial stability but has since expanded its mandate to include a wide array of global issues, including climate change, inequality, and sustainable development. However, despite its influence, the G20 has often been criticised for being an elite-driven institution that lacks inclusivity, particularly in incorporating the voices of marginalised communities and civil society actors. In South Africa, a member of the G20 and the only African representative in the bloc, civil society organisations (CSOs) have become essential actors in advocating for more inclusive and participatory governance within the G20 framework (Luckhurst, 2019). This article explores the indispensable role of civil society in the G20 framework, highlighting its potential as a catalyst for inclusive policies in South Africa and beyond.

Understanding Civil Society's Role in the G20

Civil society encompasses a broad spectrum of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), grassroots movements, advocacy groups, and think tanks that engage in policy debates and public discourse. Within the G20 context, civil society functions as a watchdog, policy advocate, and bridge between the government and the people. By engaging in consultative forums such as the Civil 20 (C20), civil society actors contribute policy recommendations and monitor the commitments made by G20 member states (C20, *n.d.*). The Civil 20 (C20) is the official engagement group of the G20 dedicated to representing civil society's interests. It serves as a platform for NGOs and advocacy groups to provide inputs into the G20 decision-making process, ensuring that social justice, human rights, and sustainable development goals (SDGs) remain central to policy discussions. In South Africa, civil society plays an integral role in this process, advocating for policies that align with the country's

developmental needs, including poverty reduction, economic justice, and environmental sustainability (Barder, 2020).

The Significance of Civil Society Engagement in the G20

1. Enhancing Policy Transparency and Accountability

One of the fundamental contributions of civil society to the G20 process is promoting transparency and accountability. Given that the G20 operates primarily through consensus among heads of state and finance ministers, decision-making processes often occur behind closed doors, making it difficult for the public to track commitments and the implementation of policies. South African CSOs have been vocal in demanding greater transparency in the country's participation in G20 negotiations. Organisations such as Corruption Watch and the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) have played a crucial role in scrutinising government policies and ensuring that international agreements align with democratic governance principles (Fleschenberg, 2016).

2. Advocating for Social and Economic Justice

Economic disparities remain a significant challenge in South Africa, and civil society has been instrumental in advocating for more inclusive economic policies within the G20 framework. South African CSOs push for policies that address wealth inequality, fair trade agreements, and debt relief for developing nations. They also call for inclusive financial policies that empower marginalised communities, particularly women, youth, and informal sector workers. By influencing discussions on financial regulations, social safety nets, and responsible business practices, civil society ensures that G20 policies do not disproportionately benefit corporate interests at the expense of vulnerable populations (Jubilee Debt Campaign, *n.d.*).

3. Fostering Sustainable Development and Climate Action

Climate change is a pressing global issue, and South Africa faces unique challenges due to its reliance on fossil fuels. Civil society has been instrumental in advocating for climate justice and sustainable energy policies within the G20. Organisations such as Greenpeace Africa, the African Climate Alliance, and groundWork have called for a just transition to renewable energy, urging the South African government

to align its economic policies with global climate commitments such as the Paris Agreement. Civil society's engagement in the G20 ensures that climate policies prioritise environmental sustainability and social equity, particularly for communities disproportionately affected by climate change (Furusawa & Ing, 2022).

4. *Empowering Marginalised Communities and Strengthening Democracy*

Civil society in South Africa plays a crucial role in ensuring that G20 policies are people-centred and inclusive of marginalised voices. The country's history of apartheid and structural inequality necessitates strong civic engagement to prevent further marginalisation. Women's rights organisations, trade unions, and youth-led movements actively participate in G20 discussions to advocate for gender equality, labour rights, and education reforms. Through petitions, policy briefs, and public demonstrations, civil society groups ensure that the South African government remains accountable to its citizens and represents their interests on the global stage (Oxfam International, *n.d.*).

Challenges Facing Civil Society Participation in the G20

Despite the critical role played by civil society, several challenges hinder its effectiveness within the G20 framework:

- **Limited Access to Decision-Making Platforms:** While forums like the C20 exist, civil society actors often struggle to gain direct access to G20 leaders and policymakers. This limits their ability to influence policy decisions effectively.
- **Government Restrictions and Political Resistance:** In some cases, governments may perceive civil society as adversarial rather than as partners in governance. This can lead to restrictions on advocacy efforts and limited engagement opportunities.
- **Funding and Capacity Constraints:** Many CSOs operate with limited financial resources, affecting their ability to conduct research, organise advocacy campaigns, and sustain long-term engagement with international institutions.
- **Bureaucratic and Institutional Barriers:** The complexity of G20 negotiations and policy discussions can make it challenging for civil society actors, particularly grassroots organisations, to navigate and influence decision-making processes effectively.

Strengthening Civil Society's Impact on G20 Policies in South Africa

To enhance civil society's role in shaping inclusive G20 policies, several strategies can be implemented:

- 1. Strengthening Collaboration Between Government and Civil Society:** Fostering a more collaborative relationship between the South African government and civil society can improve policy outcomes. Government agencies should establish formal mechanisms for consulting CSOs before attending G20 summits, ensuring that policies reflect broader societal interests.
- 2. Expanding Public Awareness and Engagement:** Many South Africans are unaware of the country's role in the G20 and its impact on domestic policies. Civil society can bridge this gap by raising public awareness through media campaigns, educational programs, and grassroots mobilisation. Increased public engagement can lead to greater accountability and stronger demands for inclusive policymaking.
- 3. Leveraging Digital Platforms for Advocacy:** Technology provides an opportunity for civil society to amplify its voice. By leveraging social media, online petitions, and virtual forums, CSOs can engage a wider audience and mobilise international support for their advocacy efforts.
- 4. Enhancing Regional and Global Networks:** South African civil society can strengthen its influence by collaborating with international counterparts in other G20 countries. Cross-border partnerships can increase pressure on G20 leaders to adopt policies that benefit not only individual nations but also the broader global community.
- 5. Securing Sustainable Funding and Capacity Building:** To sustain their advocacy efforts, civil society organisations must diversify their funding sources, including seeking support from international donors, philanthropic organisations, and private sector partnerships. Capacity-building initiatives, such as training programs and research grants, can also empower CSOs to engage more effectively in policy debates.

Conclusion

Civil society plays a vital role in ensuring that the G20 remains accountable, transparent, and inclusive. In South Africa, CSOs have

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been at the forefront of advocating for social justice, economic equality, climate action, and democratic governance within the G20 framework. While challenges persist, strengthening collaboration between civil society, government, and international partners can enhance the effectiveness of civil society engagement. By amplifying marginalised voices and pushing for policies that prioritise human rights and sustainable development, civil society remains a crucial catalyst for inclusive G20 policies in South Africa and beyond.

Amplifying citizens' voices in South Africa in the year of G-20 Chairship

Bongiwe Khumalo

In 2025, South Africa will hold the esteemed position of G-20 chair, providing it with an influential platform to address key global issues while amplifying the voices of its citizens. With a diverse population and various socio-economic challenges, South Africa's G-20 leadership comes at a time when amplifying citizen voices is imperative for fostering inclusive growth. This overview examines the rationale behind South Africa's G-20 chairship, its primary focus areas, its leadership benefits, and the importance of enhancing citizen participation in governance and policymaking.

Rationale Behind South Africa's G-20 Leadership

South Africa's selection as G-20 chair resonates with its historical struggle against apartheid and its ongoing commitment to democracy, equality, and human rights. The G-20, comprising major economies from across the globe, provides a platform for addressing issues such as economic stability, sustainable development, and climate action. South Africa's leadership in this grouping reflects its role as a representative of African interests in global economic discussions (Hartley et al, 2023).

The rationale behind South Africa's G-20 leadership extends beyond mere representation. The nation serves as a critical link between developed and developing economies, bringing forth the perspectives of the Global South into discussions dominated by more industrialized nations. Historically, the G-20 has been criticized for prioritizing the interests of its wealthier members, often sidelining those from emerging economies. South Africa's chairship is an opportunity to shift this narrative and advocate for policies promoting global equity and justice (Banda and Du Plessis, 2023).

Focus of South Africa's Chairship

The chairship of South Africa is expected to focus on several key themes:

1. **Economic Recovery and Resilience:** In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic recovery remains a pressing issue. South Africa aims to foster discussions on a sustainable economic recovery that prioritizes job creation and resilience against future shocks (Dube, 2023).
2. **Sustainable Development:** With ongoing climate change and resource management debates, South Africa plans to emphasize sustainable practices that align with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Encouraging investment in green technology and advocating for just transitions in energy consumption will be central to this agenda (Moyo, 2023).
3. **Trade and Investment:** Fostering trade relationships that consider the needs of developing nations is crucial. South Africa aims to promote equitable trade agreements that enhance regional cooperation and support local industry growth (Ndlovu, 2023).
4. **Digital Economy:** The rapid digitization of economies presents both challenges and opportunities. South Africa seeks to engage G-20 members in discussions on bridging the digital divide and harnessing technology for inclusive economic growth (Hlungwane, 2023).

Benefits of South Africa's G-20 Chairship

South Africa's role in the G-20 as chair brings several benefits:

1. **Increased Visibility and Influence:** Being in the chair position allows South Africa to showcase its leadership on the global stage, enhancing its influence in international policy discussions and potentially attracting foreign investment (Emelianenko, 2023).
2. **Strengthening Regional Cooperation:** The chairship allows South Africa to advocate for regional issues pertinent to African nations, fostering greater collaboration on issues such as trade, security, and sustainable development (Chikanda, 2023).
3. **Opportunities for Public Engagement:** The G-20 chairship can serve as a catalyst for increasing public engagement in policymaking. By fostering inclusive dialogues, South Africa can galvanize citizens' input on critical global issues, ensuring that policies reflect the needs and aspirations of its populace (Moshoeshoe and Dzinesa, 2023).
4. **Focus on Equity and Justice:** South Africa's leadership can pivot discussions towards equity, emphasizing the need for inclusive economic policies that address systemic inequalities, thereby

benefiting marginalized communities both locally and globally (Tshishonga and Tshabangu, 2023).

Importance of Amplifying Citizen Voices

Amplifying citizen voices within the context of South Africa's G-20 chairship is paramount. Here are the reasons:

1. **Democratic Participation:** Citizen engagement in governance processes reinforces democratic values and promotes accountability. As South Africa navigates its G-20 leadership, enabling citizens to express their concerns and aspirations helps ensure that decisions made at the global level are reflective of local realities (Radebe et al, 2023).
2. **Policy Relevance and Effectiveness:** Policies developed without input from citizens may not address the actual needs of the populace. Including citizen voices in the policy formulation process increases the relevance and effectiveness of the solutions proposed at the G-20 summit (Friedman, 2024).
3. **Building Social Cohesion:** In a diverse society like South Africa, amplifying multiple voices helps to foster social cohesion and understanding among different demographic groups. It allows for the creation of collective narratives that strengthen national identity and unity (Reddy, 2015).
4. **Creating Advocacy Networks:** Engaging citizens and civil society organizations helps build networks that advocate for issues critical to communities, enabling more strategic movements for change (Sangweni, 2023).
5. **Enhancing Global Citizenship:** As South Africa engages with the G-20, amplifying local voices cultivates a sense of global citizenship, reminding participants that local actions can have global consequences (Kaoma, 2023).

In Summary

To maximize citizen participation during South Africa's G-20 chairship, the following practical recommendations are proposed:

1. **Establish Inclusive Forums for Public Consultation:** Create local and national forums where citizens can discuss G-20 agendas and contribute to policy proposals. These forums should include

representatives from various sectors, ensuring diverse voices are heard (Soko, 2023).

- 2. Leverage Digital Platforms for Engagement:** Utilize technology to facilitate broader involvement. Online platforms can be used to engage the online public, especially the youth who prefer participating actively online.

Chapter Three

Digital Transformation and Knowledge Systems

G20 and Digital Transformation in South Africa: Reforms, Threats, and Opportunities.

Temidayo Ofusori

The Group of Twenty (G20), an international forum comprising 19 countries and the European Union, represents the world's largest economies (Hajnal, 2019). While South Africa is the only African nation in this influential group, its role provides a unique platform to address global economic challenges, including digital transformation. Digital transformation is the integration of digital technologies into all areas of society, economy, and governance. South Africa, as a country grappling with economic inequality, unemployment, and infrastructure deficits, digital transformation offers both unprecedented opportunities and formidable challenges. Within the G20 framework, South Africa can leverage international cooperation, policy alignment, and technological advancements to accelerate its digital journey. However, this process is not without threats, including cybersecurity risks, digital divides, and regulatory hurdles. South Africa's digital transformation agenda, in the context of G20 initiatives, is explored extensively in this write-up, which analyses the associated reforms, threats, and opportunities.

The G20's Role in Shaping Digital Transformation

The G20 has increasingly prioritized digital transformation as a cornerstone of global economic growth. Initiatives such as the G20 Digital Economy Task Force and the G20 Digital Ministers' meetings underscore the group's commitment to fostering inclusive digital ecosystems (Shelepov, 2022). South Africa's participation in the G20 offers access to best practices, funding mechanisms, and collaborative

frameworks that can bolster its digital ambitions. The G20's 2021 Roadmap Toward a Common Framework for Measuring the Digital Economy, for instance, provides a blueprint for standardizing digital metrics, which is an area where South Africa can align its policies to attract investment and monitor progress (Wang et al., 2022).

South Africa's inclusion in the G20 amplifies its voice as a representative of African interests. The continent, often sidelined in global technological discourse, stands to benefit from South Africa's advocacy for equitable digital access and innovation. The G20's emphasis on bridging the digital divide aligns with South Africa's domestic priorities, particularly in addressing disparities between urban and rural areas. Furthermore, G20 summits provide opportunities for bilateral agreements with tech giants like the United States, China, and the European Union, enabling technology transfers and capacity-building initiatives.

South Africa's Digital Transformation Landscape

South Africa's digital transformation is unfolding against a backdrop of economic and social complexity. As Africa's most industrialized economy, it boasts a relatively advanced ICT sector, with companies like MTN and Vodacom driving mobile connectivity (Christopher, 2021). The country's National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 identifies digital infrastructure as a catalyst for economic growth, aiming to achieve universal broadband access by the end of the decade. The 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) has also gained traction, with President Cyril Ramaphosa launching the Presidential Commission on the 4IR in 2019 to guide policy reforms (Marwala, 2022).

Yet, South Africa faces structural challenges that impede its digital progress. A reasonable percentage of its population remains offline, largely due to high data costs and inadequate infrastructure in rural areas (Ndulu et al., 2022). Unemployment also exacerbates the digital divide, as many citizens lack the resources or skills to participate in the digital economy. Additionally, frequent power outages, driven by the state-owned utility Eskom's inefficiencies, disrupt connectivity and digital services. These domestic realities shape South Africa's engagement with the G20 and its approach to digital reforms.

Reforms Driving Digital Transformation

South Africa has undertaken several reforms to accelerate its digital transformation, many of which align with G20 priorities. One significant step is the liberalization of the telecommunications sector. In 2022, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) concluded a landmark spectrum auction, enabling mobile operators to expand 4G and 5G networks (Mailula, 2022). This aligns with the G20's focus on enhancing digital infrastructure as a prerequisite for economic inclusion. 5G coverage has begun to penetrate urban centres like Johannesburg and Cape Town, promising faster internet speeds and new opportunities in sectors like e-commerce and fintech (Maluleke et al., 2022).

Another key reform is the promotion of digital skills development. The G20's emphasis on human capital in the digital age resonates with South Africa's efforts to upskill its workforce. Programs like the Digital Skills Forum and partnerships with international firms such as Microsoft and Google aim to train millions of young South Africans in coding, data analytics, and cybersecurity. The Department of Basic Education has also introduced coding and robotics into school curricula, targeting the next generation of digital innovators (Heyns, 2023). These initiatives reflect a recognition that without a skilled populace, technological advancements will widen rather than narrow inequality.

Policy frameworks have also evolved to support digital transformation. The National Digital and Future Skills Strategy, launched in 2021, seeks to coordinate government, private sector, and civil society efforts to build a digital economy (Heyns, 2023). Meanwhile, the Electronic Communications Amendment Act facilitates e-governance by mandating digital service delivery in public institutions (Ngoepe & Saurombe, 2016). Such reforms position South Africa to capitalize on G20-led discussions on digital governance and interoperability, potentially attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) in tech hubs like Silicon Cape.

Threats to South Africa's Digital Ambitions

Despite these reforms, South Africa's digital transformation faces significant threats, many of which are amplified in the global context of the G20. Cybersecurity is a pressing concern. As digital adoption grows, so does the risk of cyberattacks. In 2023, the South African

banking sector reported a surge in ransomware incidents, costing millions and undermining trust in digital platforms (Siphambili et al., 2024). The G20's focus on cybersecurity cooperation offers a lifeline, but South Africa's limited resources and expertise hinder its ability to implement robust defences. Without addressing this gap, the country risks becoming a weak link in the global digital economy.

The digital divide remains a formidable threat. While urban areas enjoy increasing connectivity, rural regions lag far behind. High data costs, which are among the most expensive in Africa, tend to exclude low-income households from the digital revolution. The G20's pledge to close the global digital divide is laudable, but South Africa must contend with domestic inequalities that global frameworks cannot fully address. Failure to bridge this gap could deepen social unrest, as seen in the 2021 riots, where economic exclusion fuelled violence (Moyo & Munoriyarwa, 2021).

Regulatory uncertainty poses another challenge. South Africa's data protection laws, notably the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), align with global standards like the EU's GDPR, a priority for G20 digital trade discussions. However, enforcement remains inconsistent, and small businesses struggle to comply (Da Veiga et al., 2024). Additionally, debates over data localization and cross-border data flows are hot topics in G20 negotiations, which could deter international tech firms from investing in South Africa if policies become overly restrictive.

Global competition within the G20 also poses a threat to South Africa's digital aspirations. Countries like India and China, with their vast tech ecosystems, dominate discussions on artificial intelligence (AI) and digital manufacturing. South Africa, with its smaller market and resource constraints, risks being overshadowed unless it carves out a niche, such as in renewable energy-powered data centres or African fintech solutions.

Opportunities for Growth and Innovation

Amid these threats, digital transformation presents South Africa with transformative opportunities, many of which can be amplified through collaboration with the G20. The fintech sector is a standout example. South Africa's advanced financial services industry, coupled with widespread mobile penetration, has birthed innovations like mobile payment platforms (e.g., M-Pesa's influence) and blockchain-

based solutions (Webb, 2024). The G20's focus on financial inclusion provides a platform for South Africa to showcase these successes, attracting investment and partnerships to scale them across Africa.

E-commerce is another growth area. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated online retail, with platforms like Takealot and international players like Amazon expanding their footprint in South Africa (Dakora & Rambe, 2022). The G20's work on digital trade facilitation, such as harmonizing e-commerce regulations, could help South African firms tap into global markets, boosting exports of digital services and goods (BAL, 2017).

The green digital economy offers a unique opportunity for South Africa to lead within the G20 (Prabhakar, 2024). As climate change dominates global agendas, South Africa's abundant solar and wind resources position it to develop sustainable digital infrastructure. Data centres powered by renewable energy could attract tech giants seeking to reduce their carbon footprints, aligning with G20 commitments to net-zero goals (Nguyen et al., 2024). This niche could also create jobs, addressing South Africa's unemployment crisis while enhancing its global standing.

Education and health sectors stand to benefit immensely from digital transformation. Telemedicine initiatives, spurred by the pandemic, have expanded access to healthcare in remote areas, while e-learning platforms mitigate disruptions caused by power outages or infrastructure deficits. The G20's emphasis on digital public goods, open-source tools and knowledge sharing could accelerate these efforts, enabling South Africa to leapfrog traditional development barriers.

Finally, South Africa's role in the G20 positions it as a gateway to Africa's digital economy. With the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) gaining momentum, South Africa can leverage its G20 membership to advocate for continent-wide digital policies, fostering regional integration. This leadership role could attract FDI, positioning South Africa as a hub for tech innovation and trade.

Conclusion

The G20 provides South Africa with a critical platform to navigate the complexities of digital transformation. Reforms in telecommunications, skills development, and digital governance demonstrate the country's commitment to harnessing technology

for growth. However, threats such as cybersecurity risks, the digital divide, and regulatory challenges underscore the fragility of this journey. Opportunities in fintech, e-commerce, and the green digital economy offer pathways to prosperity, particularly if South Africa capitalizes on G20 collaboration to amplify its efforts. By addressing threats head-on and seizing emerging opportunities, South Africa can not only transform its own economy but also lead Africa into the digital age. The G20, with its vast network and shared vision, will be a pivotal partner in this endeavour, ensuring that digital transformation becomes a force for inclusion, innovation, and sustainable development.

Amplifying African Knowledge Systems in G20 Policy Debates

Temidayo Ofusori

The G20, as a major global platform for economic cooperation, plays a crucial role in shaping policies that affect both developed and emerging economies. However, African perspectives, particularly indigenous knowledge systems, remain underrepresented in these discussions. African knowledge systems encompass centuries-old traditions, innovations, and practices that contribute to sustainability, governance, medicine, agriculture, and economic resilience. Integrating these systems into G20 policy debates would acknowledge Africa's intellectual contributions and promote more inclusive and effective global policymaking. African knowledge systems (AKS) include indigenous scientific, environmental, agricultural, and social governance practices that have sustained communities for generations. These systems are deeply rooted in localized wisdom, collective problem-solving, and ecological balance. Despite their relevance, Western paradigms often overshadow them in global discussions. Recognizing and integrating AKS into international policies can provide solutions to contemporary global challenges, including climate change, food security, and public health.

The Exclusion of African Perspectives in G20 Policy Debates

Historically, Africa has been significantly underrepresented in the G20, with South Africa being the only African country to hold permanent membership for many years. This limited representation has resulted in Africa's diverse knowledge systems, cultural perspectives, and indigenous contributions being largely overlooked in global economic and policy discussions. Although the recent inclusion of the African Union (AU) as a permanent member of the G20 is a positive step forward, a significant gap exists in ensuring that African knowledge systems are actively integrated into policy dialogues and decision-making processes.

The overwhelming dominance of Western-centric policy frameworks within the G20 often results in economic and development solutions that do not fully align with the realities and priorities of African nations. Many policy recommendations emerging from

G20 discussions are rooted in Western economic, scientific, and technological paradigms, which frequently neglect the contributions of indigenous African knowledge systems. This exclusion perpetuates a cycle in which African-led solutions to critical global challenges, such as climate change adaptation, food security, and governance, are undervalued or ignored.

Several key barriers contribute to the continued marginalization of African perspectives in G20 policy debates:

Eurocentric Bias: Global policymaking tends to prioritize Western scientific, economic, and technological models over indigenous knowledge systems. The prevailing assumption that modern solutions are inherently superior to traditional knowledge has led to the sidelining of African contributions despite the proven effectiveness of indigenous practices in areas such as agriculture, medicine, and conflict resolution.

Limited African Representation: Prior to the inclusion of the AU, South Africa was the only African nation with a seat at the G20 table. Given that Africa is a continent of 54 diverse nations, having a single country represent the entire region was insufficient to reflect the wide range of African perspectives, challenges, and innovations. Even with the AU's membership, ensuring that all African countries have opportunities to contribute meaningfully to policy discussions is still necessary.

Lack of Institutional Integration: Indigenous knowledge is often not formally documented or recognized within international organizations, making it difficult to incorporate into policy recommendations. African traditional knowledge systems operate through oral traditions, community-based governance structures, and experiential learning, which do not always fit neatly into the bureaucratic frameworks of global institutions like the G20. Without efforts to bridge this gap, African knowledge remains undervalued and underutilized in shaping international policies.

To address these challenges, it is crucial that the G20 actively engages with African scholars, policymakers, and indigenous knowledge holders to create an inclusive platform where diverse perspectives are acknowledged and incorporated into global decision-making. Strengthening research, documentation, and advocacy for African knowledge systems can contribute to a more equitable and representative global policy landscape.

The Role of African Knowledge Systems in Key Policy Areas

Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability: Africa has a rich tradition of environmental stewardship, with indigenous practices that emphasize sustainability and biodiversity conservation. Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), such as water harvesting, agroforestry, and rotational grazing, has been effective in managing ecosystems for centuries. G20 discussions on climate change could benefit from integrating these practices into global sustainability frameworks. For instance, traditional rainwater harvesting systems in the Sahel region have significantly improved water security in arid zones (Tefera et al., 2024; Leal Filho et al., 2022). Agroecological practices such as intercropping and permaculture also align with modern sustainable agriculture models (Otieno, 2024).

Food Security and Agriculture: African agricultural practices, including intercropping, permaculture, and indigenous seed preservation, have proven resilient in the face of climate variability. The dominance of industrial agriculture in global policy discussions often disregards these time-tested methods. Incorporating African agricultural wisdom into G20 policies could enhance global food security by promoting sustainable and climate-resilient farming practices. Research has shown that indigenous seed banks contribute significantly to biodiversity and climate resilience (Andersen et al.; Wambugu et al., 2023). Countries like Ethiopia and Zimbabwe have successfully implemented community seed banking to safeguard food sovereignty (Wambugu et al., 2023).

Public Health and Traditional Medicine: African traditional medicine has long played a critical role in healthcare systems. Herbal treatments, holistic healing practices, and community-based wellness approaches are still widely used across the continent. Given the limitations of biomedical healthcare in many regions, integrating traditional medicine into G20 health discussions could strengthen global health resilience, particularly in the context of pandemics and emerging diseases. The role of traditional medicine in Africa, particularly in managing diseases such as malaria and COVID-19, was documented in the literature (Attah et al., 2021; Utsua, 2020). The use of Artemisia-based treatments for malaria, which originates from African herbal medicine, exemplifies the global relevance of AKS in healthcare (Utsua, 2020).

Governance and Conflict Resolution: Africa has a rich history of participatory governance and conflict resolution mechanisms,

such as the Gacaca courts in Rwanda and the Ubuntu philosophy of reconciliation (Teleki and Kamga, 2020; Shewell, 2020). These indigenous systems emphasize restorative justice and communal harmony. Incorporating these approaches into global discussions on governance and peacebuilding can offer alternative conflict resolution models that prioritize social cohesion. Studies on indigenous governance systems highlight their effectiveness in fostering social stability and reducing conflict (Shewell, 2020; Teleki and Kamga, 2020).

Technology and Innovation: Despite misconceptions that African knowledge is rooted solely in tradition, the continent has a history of scientific and technological innovations. African civilizations pioneered metallurgical advancements, architectural feats, and early mathematical systems (Ndasauka, 2024). Today, grassroots innovations in fintech, mobile banking, and renewable energy are transforming African economies. These innovations should be recognized and included in G20 digital transformation and sustainable development discussions. For instance, M-Pesa, a mobile banking innovation from Kenya, has revolutionized financial inclusion across Africa and beyond (Ndung'u, 2018; Mulili, 2022). Similarly, Africa's advancements in off-grid solar energy solutions demonstrate indigenous ingenuity in addressing energy poverty (Sandula et al.; Sanneh, 2018).

Strategies for Amplifying African Knowledge Systems in G20 Debates

Strengthening African Representation: The inclusion of the AU in the G20 should be leveraged to promote African knowledge systems. African leaders, scholars, and policy experts must actively advocate for the integration of indigenous knowledge into policy discussions.

Institutionalizing Indigenous Knowledge in Global Policymaking: African governments and research institutions should work towards formally documenting and validating Indigenous knowledge systems. Creating policy briefs, research papers, and case studies on African knowledge contributions will facilitate their integration into global debates.

Building Knowledge Exchange Platforms: Establishing partnerships between African research institutions, international think tanks, and G20 working groups can foster the exchange of knowledge. Platforms

that facilitate dialogue between indigenous knowledge holders and global policymakers can bridge the knowledge gap.

Promoting Policy Advocacy and Diplomacy: African diplomats and policymakers should actively engage in advocacy efforts within the G20 to push for the recognition of African knowledge systems. Policy advocacy should emphasize the practical benefits of these systems in addressing global challenges.

Investing in African-Led Research and Innovation: The G20 should commit to funding research initiatives that explore and document African knowledge systems. Supporting African-led innovation hubs, indigenous technology projects, and traditional medicine research will validate the relevance of AKS in modern contexts.

Conclusion

Amplifying African knowledge systems in G20 policy debates is essential for fostering inclusive and sustainable global governance. African indigenous knowledge offers valuable insights into environmental management, food security, public health, governance, and technology. By integrating these systems into G20 policymaking, the world can benefit from Africa's wealth of knowledge and contribute to more holistic, contextually relevant, and effective global solutions. African leaders, scholars, and policymakers must seize this moment to assert the continent's intellectual contributions and reshape global discourses for a more equitable future.

Chapter Four

South Africa's Role and Leadership in the G20

South Africa and the G20: Policy Priorities and Achievements

Sunday Israel Oyebamiji

South Africa's membership in the Group of Twenty (G20) gives the country a critical platform to engage with the world's largest economies on global economic governance, financial stability, and sustainable development. As the only African member of the G20, South Africa plays a strategic role in representing both national and continental interests. This article examines South Africa's policy priorities within the G20, key achievements and challenges in aligning global and domestic objectives, and its leadership in advocating for Africa's development agenda.

South Africa's Policy Priorities within the G20 Framework

South Africa's participation in the G20 is guided by three key policy priorities: economic growth, climate change, and sustainable development. These priorities reflect the country's domestic needs while aligning with the broader objectives of the G20.

Economic Growth and Financial Stability

A fundamental priority for South Africa within the G20 is economic growth and financial stability. The South African government views G20 engagement as an opportunity to address critical economic challenges such as unemployment, inequality, and sluggish GDP growth (Burger, 2024). South Africa advocates for macroeconomic policies that promote inclusive growth, improved investment climates, and financial sector reforms. One key area of focus is trade and investment. South Africa has continuously emphasised the need

for equitable global trade policies that benefit emerging economies. The country has supported initiatives to strengthen the multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization (WTO) while calling for fairer trade agreements that consider the challenges faced by developing countries (Edwards, 2024). Furthermore, South Africa has actively participated in discussions on global tax reforms to ensure that multinational corporations contribute fairly to the economies where they operate (Citaristi, 2022).

Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

Climate change is another critical priority for South Africa within the G20. The country is committed to achieving a just energy transition that balances economic growth with environmental sustainability. As one of the largest carbon emitters in Africa, South Africa faces significant pressure to reduce its reliance on coal while ensuring energy security and economic stability (Khavhagali, Reckien, Biesbroek, Mantlana, and Pfeffer, 2024). At the G20, South Africa has advocated for increased financial support from developed nations to assist in the transition to renewable energy. The Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP), a multi-billion-dollar initiative involving South Africa, the United States, the European Union, and other partners, is a notable example of this engagement (World Bank, 2023). The initiative aims to mobilise financial resources to support South Africa's shift towards cleaner energy sources while addressing social and economic impacts on coal-dependent communities.

Sustainable Development and Social Equity

South Africa has consistently pushed for sustainable development policies that address poverty, inequality, and social justice. The country aligns its G20 engagement with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasising the importance of inclusive economic policies, education, healthcare, and infrastructure development (UNDP, 2023). One of South Africa's key contributions to the G20 is its emphasis on human capital development. Through various initiatives, South Africa has promoted skills development, youth employment, and gender equality as essential for sustainable growth. The country has also called for increased investment in Africa's digital economy to bridge the technological divide and enhance global competitiveness (Ramaphosa, 2023).

Achievements and Challenges in Aligning G20 Objectives with Domestic Goals

South Africa has made notable progress in leveraging its G20 membership to advance national and regional priorities. However, several challenges remain in aligning global commitments with domestic realities.

Key Achievements

- 1. Increased Investment in Infrastructure:** South Africa has successfully leveraged the G20 platform to attract investment in critical infrastructure projects, particularly in the energy and transportation sectors. The JETP is a landmark achievement that demonstrates the potential of global cooperation in addressing domestic development challenges (World Bank, 2023).
- 2. Advancing Global Health Initiatives:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa was crucial in advocating equitable vaccine distribution. The country co-lead efforts with India to push for a temporary waiver on intellectual property rights for vaccines, ensuring broader access for developing nations (WHO, 2023).
- 3. Strengthening Africa's Voice in Global Governance:** South Africa has ensured that African concerns are included in G20 discussions. This includes advocating for debt relief, increased development financing, and support for African Union (AU) integration efforts (Adibe, 2023).

Challenges and Limitations

Despite these achievements, South Africa faces several challenges in fully aligning G20 commitments with domestic goals:

- 1. Economic Constraints:** South Africa's economy has struggled with low growth, unemployment, and fiscal pressures. While G20 policies emphasise economic recovery, domestic structural challenges limit the country's ability to fully benefit from global initiatives (Burger, 2024).
- 2. Energy Transition Dilemmas:** The transition from coal to renewable energy presents economic and social challenges, particularly for communities dependent on coal mining. While

international support has been secured, implementing a just transition remains complex (Sebele, 2024).

- 3. Balancing National and Continental Priorities:** As the sole African member of the G20, South Africa faces the dual responsibility of representing national interests while advocating for broader African concerns. This sometimes creates tensions between domestic policies and regional commitments (Adibe, 2023).

South Africa's Leadership in Promoting Africa's Development Agenda at the G20

South Africa plays a crucial role in ensuring that African perspectives are integrated into G20 discussions. Through its participation, the country has championed several initiatives aimed at addressing the continent's economic and development challenges.

Advocating for Debt Relief and Financial Inclusion

One of South Africa's most significant contributions to the G20 is its advocacy for debt relief for African nations. Many African economies face unsustainable debt burdens, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and global economic downturns (Gallagher, Guzman, Stiglitz and Uy, 2024). South Africa has supported initiatives such as the G20's Common Framework for Debt Treatments, which seeks to provide restructuring mechanisms for heavily indebted nations.

Enhancing Trade and Investment Opportunities

South Africa has pushed for policies promoting investment in African economies, particularly infrastructure, manufacturing, and technology. The country has supported initiatives such as the G20 Compact with Africa, which aims to improve the business environment and attract foreign investment to the continent (Rwigema, 2023).

Strengthening Multilateralism and Global Governance

As a strong advocate for multilateralism, South Africa has emphasised the need for fair representation of developing nations in global decision-making processes. This includes calls for reform of the

United Nations Security Council and enhanced African participation in international financial institutions (Ramaphosa, 2023).

Conclusion

South Africa's engagement in the G20 is shaped by its commitment to promoting economic growth, addressing climate action, and achieving sustainable development. While the country has made notable achievements in securing investment, advancing Africa's development agenda, and advocating for global reforms, challenges remain in aligning international commitments with domestic realities. Moving forward, South Africa must continue leveraging its G20 membership to drive meaningful change nationally and across the African continent.

The Role of Think Tanks in Shaping South Africa's G20 Agenda

Thelma Nyarhi

With the rapid growth in regional and global influence, South Africa has received increasing attention from academics and politicians. In addition, the recent geopolitical tensions have further contributed to the pressures surrounding South Africa's G20 presidency. This attention has drawn the interest of policymakers probing the need for empirical research analysis in framing policies. This is where think tanks come in. With influence stretching far back as the 1970s, think tanks have, over time, gained valuable orientation and alignment within policy communities. This is essential at a time an African country has for the first time entered the global stage to push for an agenda that influences the global stage and subsequent foreign policy interrelations.

South Africa (SA) has a great task of not only defending the continent's interests but also managing the G20 interrelations. Recently, these have proved challenging. Despite the strained ties with regional key players such as Rwanda and internal G20 tensions with key players such as the United States of America (USA), SA holds a privileged position of playing a pivotal role in leveraging its platform to attract global partners in pushing its agenda. As a voice on the continent, SA needs support in shaping and influencing foreign policy that is inclusive and sustainable. This requires lots of research analysis and probable thought-out policy recommendations.

Role of think tanks – Bridging the gap

The first task is defining what a think tank is. This is important as the concept is often used loosely. Although the term 'think tank' may hold or connote respect in the knowledge production industry, it still remains excessively generalised. What makes an organisation or network a think tank? Are the ideas/commentaries suggested valid truths? What makes them credible? Who do they serve? The generality in the use of the concept often raises questions of the validity of an organisation claiming to be one. The general understanding is that it functions to bridge the gap between knowledge and policy. But is this not a common function in most civil society organisations

(CSO's)? Are they not bridging the gap in their quest to disseminate knowledge and engage with both the civil and political space? Does this make them think tanks? While defining a think tank has proven difficult, due to the considerably diverse focus areas, think tanks have generally been understood to be 'independent' and or 'charitable' (Shaw, Russell, Parsons and Greenhalgh, 2015: 58). Their task has been to bridge the gap between civil society, policymaking institutions, and academia. Essentially, they serve as policy research analysis and engagement organizations that act as independent voices that translate complex ideas into understandable and accessible information. This is what sets them apart. Their independence, however, should not be seen as autonomy (Jezierska and Sörbom, 2021: 396) as they ought to work alongside the policy community players to come up with a policy that serves the citizens.

A think tank's main priority, therefore, includes contributing to public debate and policy development through research analysis, policy recommendations, public engagement like forums (Abelson, 2018: 15), and capacity training of civil society actors and government officials involved in policy framing, amongst others. They draw strength in their ability to advocate for certain ideals as well as hold governments accountable to policy implementations. They contribute to the monitoring and evaluation systems of policy decisions. This is highly essential, particularly in the troika framing of the G20 presidency, where continuity and sustainability of projects are key from one convening term to another. Monitoring and evaluation of policy framings thereby help measure the effectiveness of proposed policies and help realize policy gaps and patterns over time.

The think tanks presumed independence contributes to their credibility as voices of reason; however, this is dependent on their liberal access and interests. Public perception has sometimes branded think tanks as being disconnected from citizen reality or elitist. This goes back to the question of who think tanks serve. Their esteemed position comes with challenges and also places a huge responsibility on them to remain loyal to the greater cause of social development and sustainability.

Challenges and Limitations

G20 recognises the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all United Nations Member States. Core to its mandate is the continued implementation and recommitment to

the principles of the 2030 Agenda. This is evident through the annual themes, which have, over time, centred around the idea of ‘oneness’ or ‘togetherness’ in tackling issues of global sustainability. This year’s theme focuses on ‘solidarity, equality and sustainability’ (G20 South Africa, 2025) in the world.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)^[1] call to action has at its heart the need for global partnership. Regarding the G20, recommitment and implementation of these goals have proven important. In support of this quest, think tanks’ analytical capabilities may sometimes face challenges or be limited. A think tank’s functionality and effectiveness are dependent on the context in which it operates. For example, some think tanks may operate outside liberal democracies, therefore limiting the institution’s access and organizational power or influence in the country. In South Africa, however, although think tanks may have organisational power or influence due to liberal freedoms, their effectiveness is still influenced in various ways, including economic, social, and political power. Consequent tensions are likely to paralyse or threaten think tank activities, thereby rendering them ineffective in carrying out their role in advocacy. Power dynamics, therefore, profoundly affect the effectiveness of think tanks. They sometimes have to manoeuvre these power dynamics to maintain their credibility, relevance and independence.

Economic power encompasses funding potentials, means of acquiring, as well as the intellectual wares (Medvertz, 2012), which are a major determinant of think tank operationalization and effectiveness. Funding constraints and donor dependencies affect the sustainability of think tanks, thereby affecting the research and hiring culture within the organisation. Social power, on the other hand, focuses on the relationships (Fiske and Berdahl, 2007: 680) between think tanks and their communities. Strained relationships or perceived public distrust can affect the community’s credibility, mobilization, and social engagements. Some think tanks have been perceived to be elitist and disconnected from local realities. This undermines their credibility and poses challenges to the research data collection schemes necessary for policy frameworks.

Political power includes government interference (Struyk, 2006); policy implementation issues due to conflict; advocacy restrictions (Weaver, 1989); corruption, and geopolitics. Geopolitical relations have shaped the manner in which institutions and alliances function (Abelson, 2014). This has affected the possibility of

international cooperation, which in turn affects the implementation of the SDGs. Think tanks' influence is measured by their involvement in public policy. Their involvement, however, is dependent on their access and whether policymakers commit to and implement their recommended policies. Sometimes implementation gaps arise, and this is a common trait within regional or international blocs or partnerships. Despite strong recommendations from think tanks, implementation is dependent on the members translating recommendations into tangible practices in their own countries.

Recommendation and Conclusion

Think tanks are critical players within the policy ecosystem. Their involvement in addressing complex social challenges through research analysis has proven to be essential in enabling the public and policymakers to make informed decisions backed by empirical evidence. Their influence extends beyond civil society and international and local organizations to include governments. This makes them key players in the shaping of public discourse and policy outcomes. Considering South Africa's priorities range from financial and geopolitical stability to innovation, sustainable social development, and equality, think tanks are responsible for contextualising recent G20 Agendas and highlighting implementation gaps.

Despite this huge responsibility placed on them, it is still important that we, the public, question the interests they serve and join the policy dialogues that would reconfigure our lives. It is through this that they, too, may be kept accountable for the role they play in policy framing and shaping the future for generations to come. In any contested political space, a myriad of interests are always at play. Public, foreign, or personal interests are all silent drivers in any decision-making process. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the interests that form the foundational basis of policy work and contribute to the policy narratives in our countries.

The Role of Inter-Faith Organizations in G-20 Discussions

Bongiwe Khumalo

As South Africa takes the helm as the chair of the G-20, the intersection of faith and global governance becomes increasingly important. Interfaith organizations play a crucial role in promoting the G-20 objectives through advocacy, networking, and fostering dialogue among diverse communities. This discussion outlines the contributions of the inter-faith community, the challenges faced within G-20 contexts, and the essential issues that require attention to enhance the effectiveness of their participation in the G-20 processes.

Promoting G-20 Objectives

Interfaith organizations contribute significantly to the G-20 discussions by promoting inclusivity, sustainability, and social justice. These organizations serve as bridges that connect various faith communities, facilitating dialogue on pressing global issues such as poverty alleviation, climate change, and social inequality. By leveraging their moral authority and grassroots networks, inter-faith bodies can encourage commitments from G-20 countries to uphold human rights and promote peaceful coexistence.

Furthermore, inter-faith organizations bring diverse perspectives that enrich discussions on global governance. Their emphasis on ethics and moral responsibility aligns with the G-20's objectives of fostering a stable, inclusive, and sustainable global economy. They help embed collective values into the decision-making processes, advocating for policies that prioritize social equity and environmental stewardship.

Challenges faced by the Inter-Faith Community

Despite their critical role, inter-faith organizations encounter various challenges in engaging with G-20 discussions:

- 1. Marginalization:** There can be a tendency for inter-faith voices to be overshadowed by state actors and economic interests.

Their contributions are often deemed less relevant in technical discussions focused on trade and finance.

2. **Resource Limitations:** Inter-faith organizations frequently operate with limited resources, impacting their ability to participate fully in global dialogues. This disparity affects their representation and influence within G-20 engagements.
3. **Diverse Perspectives:** The diversity within faith communities can lead to challenges in consensus-building. Different doctrinal beliefs may complicate unified messaging and advocacy.
4. **Political Backdrop:** The political climate in certain G-20 countries may hinder the ability of inter-faith organizations to operate freely and engage in dialogue, particularly where religious tensions exist.
5. **Access to Decision-Makers:** Inter-faith organizations often lack direct access to G-20 leaders and decision-making processes, limiting their ability to influence policies effectively.

Key Issues from an Inter-Faith Perspective

To ensure that the inter-faith community's participation is meaningful, several key issues need to be addressed:

1. **Social Justice and Inequality:** The widening gap between rich and poor is a focus area for inter-faith organizations. They can advocate for policies that promote equitable economic growth and social protection for marginalized groups.
2. **Climate Change and Sustainability:** Faith communities are powerful environmental stewardship and sustainability advocates. Their role can be instrumental in pushing G-20 nations toward ambitious climate action and sustainable development practices.
3. **Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution:** Inter-faith organizations can play a significant role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts, which are vital for global stability. Their unique positioning allows them to engage communities and foster dialogue in areas of conflict.
4. **Global Health:** In light of recent pandemics, inter-faith organizations can address health disparities and promote global health initiatives, ensuring that vulnerable populations receive necessary resources and care.
5. **Human Rights Advocacy:** Strengthening human rights and advocating for the protection of religious freedoms should

be prioritized in G-20 discussions, supported by inter-faith coalitions and networks.

Promoting Inclusivity through G-20 Engagement

The G-20 has a significant role in promoting an inclusive approach to global governance. By engaging with inter-faith organizations, it can harness these groups' moral and ethical perspectives. Inclusivity can create a platform for dialogue that brings together diverse voices, ensuring comprehensive approaches to the global challenges addressed by the G-20.

Recommendations for Consideration by the G-20

To enhance the participation of the inter-faith community in G-20 discussions, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1. Establish an Inter-Faith Advisory Panel:** Create a dedicated advisory panel within the G-20 framework to ensure that the voices of inter-faith organizations are heard and integrated into discussions and decision-making.
- 2. Facilitate Access and Capacity Building:** Enhance resource allocation to inter-faith organizations, allowing them access to forums, training, and tools needed to engage effectively in global discussions.
- 3. Promote Dialogues on Shared Values:** Organize roundtable discussions focused on identifying common ground among faith communities and G-20 leaders on key global issues, fostering collaborative solutions.
- 4. Integrate Inter-Faith Perspectives into Policy Development:** Encourage G-20 countries to incorporate insights from inter-faith dialogues into their official policies, particularly on topics such as social justice, sustainable development, and peace.

In conclusion, the inter-faith community is an important constituent of the G-20 discussions, and its concerns and insights need to be taken into account by the G-20 chair and its partners.

South Africa as a Gateway to African Aspirations in the G20

Temidayo Ofusori

South Africa occupies a distinctive and influential role on the global stage as the sole African member of the Group of Twenty (G20), a premier forum for international economic collaboration. This exclusive membership underscores South Africa's strategic importance, not only as a robust emerging market but also as a pivotal gateway for the broader African continent. Its inclusion in this powerful assembly signifies recognition of its leadership. It highlights its capacity to advocate for Africa's collective interests within a global context dominated by advanced and emerging economies. As the G20 provides a platform for deliberating critical issues affecting the global economy, South Africa's participation becomes vital in ensuring that African perspectives and priorities are effectively represented. While the African continent is diverse in its economies, cultures, and challenges, South Africa's membership allows it to act as a unifying voice, articulating shared aspirations such as economic integration, sustainable development, and enhanced global influence. This responsibility is not merely symbolic; it reflects a practical and strategic avenue for channelling Africa's developmental goals into the policies and frameworks shaped by the G20.

South Africa's Role in the G20

Since joining the G20 in 1999, South Africa has consistently utilized its membership to advocate for issues central to the Global South, focusing on challenges facing African nations. As the only African member of the G20, South Africa represents the continent's collective interests, emphasizing inclusive economic growth, reducing inequality, and fostering sustainable development. Its role as a bridge between developed economies and Africa positions South Africa as a vital intermediary, ensuring African priorities are integrated into global decision-making processes.

One of South Africa's most impactful contributions to the G20 is its commitment to development-oriented initiatives. It has championed debt relief for low-income countries, enabling them to redirect resources toward essential areas such as health, education,

and infrastructure. South Africa has also strongly advocated for increased funding of infrastructure projects, recognizing their transformative potential in driving economic growth, enhancing connectivity, and improving resilience across the continent.

South Africa's leadership within the African Union (AU) further amplifies its influence on global platforms. Aligning with the AU's strategic objectives, it ensures that the continent presents a unified agenda in G20 discussions, advocating for equitable trade, climate action, and sustainable development financing. Through its active diplomacy and commitment to multilateralism, South Africa has solidified its role as a crucial voice for African and Global South interests within the G20 framework.

Amplifying African Voices

The G20 serves as a vital platform for South Africa to amplify the voices of African nations that are otherwise underrepresented in global decision-making. As Africa's sole member in this influential forum, South Africa advocates for policies that promote equitable trade, increased development aid, and fair access to global markets. It plays a crucial role in advocating for reforms in international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, emphasizing the need to reflect the evolving global economic landscape and address the systemic underrepresentation of African countries.

South Africa also uses its position to spotlight challenges that are uniquely pressing for the African continent. These include the disproportionate impact of climate change on African nations, the urgent need for investment in resilient health systems, and the critical importance of technology transfer to drive digital transformation. Through targeted initiatives such as the Compact with Africa (CwA), South Africa has sought to attract private sector investment to the continent, thereby fostering economic growth, creating jobs, and enhancing development outcomes. By leveraging its G20 membership, South Africa ensures that African perspectives are included and prioritized in discussions that shape the global economic and policy landscape, ultimately advancing the continent's aspirations on the world stage.

Addressing Africa's Economic Challenges

Africa faces various economic challenges, including high debt levels, limited industrialization, and inequitable trade terms. As a G20 member, South Africa plays a pivotal role in addressing these issues by advocating for policies that promote debt sustainability, enhance regional trade, and attract foreign direct investment. One key initiative South Africa champions is the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which has the potential to transform Africa's economic landscape by fostering intra-continental trade and driving industrialization. By securing G20 support for the AfCFTA, South Africa can help unlock Africa's economic potential and strengthen regional integration.

Additionally, South Africa's commitment to combating illicit financial flows is crucial to addressing one of Africa's most significant development barriers. Illicit financial flows drain billions of dollars annually from African economies, undermining economic growth, exacerbating inequality, and limiting resources for essential development projects. Within the G20, South Africa advocates for stronger international cooperation to combat tax evasion, money laundering, and financial crimes. These efforts aim to ensure that African resources remain within the continent to fund health, education, and infrastructure development. Through its G20 platform, South Africa highlights Africa's challenges and promotes sustainable and transformative solutions that align with the continent's long-term development goals.

Advancing Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are at the heart of Africa's development aspirations, and South Africa plays a pivotal role in advancing these objectives within the G20. A key aspect of this advocacy includes promoting increased investment in critical areas such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare. For example, the continent's energy transition presents both a challenge and an opportunity for South Africa to assume a leadership role. Balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability is essential. South Africa's push for just energy transitions within the G20 ensures that African nations receive the financial and technical support needed to adopt clean energy solutions without undermining their development goals.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the fragility of African health systems, underscoring the urgency of building resilient healthcare infrastructure. South Africa has been instrumental in advocating for equitable vaccine distribution and supporting local manufacturing of vaccines and medical supplies, fostering greater self-reliance in global health. These initiatives address immediate needs and align with Africa's long-term aspirations for capacity building and sustainable development. Through its G20 membership, South Africa ensures that African priorities, such as climate resilience, public health, and economic empowerment, remain central to global development efforts aligned with the SDGs.

Strengthening Partnerships for African Development

South Africa's role as a bridge to African aspirations within the G20 is strengthened by its ability to build partnerships with other member states. By collaborating with emerging economies and traditional development partners, South Africa fosters consensus on critical issues aligning with Africa's development priorities. Initiatives focusing on climate finance, digital inclusion, and women's empowerment are particularly impactful, offering opportunities to advance sustainable progress across the continent.

A recent milestone in institutionalizing Africa's voice in global governance is the African Union's permanent inclusion in the G20, which South Africa and its allies championed. This development marks a transformative shift, ensuring that Africa's perspectives and priorities are represented not solely through South Africa but directly integrated into G20 processes. The AU's inclusion underscores a growing recognition of Africa's importance in shaping global economic and policy discussions.

South Africa's advocacy for this change reflects its broader commitment to multilateralism and the equitable representation of developing regions. By leveraging its G20 membership, South Africa ensures that Africa's challenges and opportunities—such as addressing climate vulnerability, fostering economic growth, and promoting inclusive development—remain central to the global agenda, creating a more balanced and inclusive framework for international cooperation.

Conclusion

South Africa's participation in the G20 reflects its leadership and unwavering commitment to advancing the aspirations of Africa on the global stage. As the sole African member of this influential forum, South Africa consistently advocates for inclusive policies, equitable development, and reducing systemic inequalities that disproportionately affect the continent. By serving as a bridge between Africa and the world's most powerful economies, South Africa ensures that African priorities such as sustainable development, climate resilience, and economic integration are firmly embedded in global policy discussions.

While significant challenges persist, including addressing inequality, fostering regional trade, and combating climate vulnerability, the opportunities for transformative progress are substantial. South Africa's leadership in promoting initiatives like energy transitions, debt relief, and investment in critical infrastructure underscores its pivotal role in aligning global frameworks with Africa's development objectives.

As Africa moves toward deeper economic integration and sustainable growth, the role of South Africa in the G20 will remain essential. South Africa continues to pave the way for a more inclusive global economic order that reflects Africa's aspirations and potential by championing the continent's interests, building strategic partnerships, and fostering international collaboration.

The Future of Multilateralism and the Role of the G20

Paul Kariuki and Yolokazi Mfuto

Multilateralism, the principle of coordinating relations among three or more states based on agreed-upon norms and rules, has long been a cornerstone of global governance (Acharya, 2023). Its historical roots can be traced back to international agreements, such as the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which established the concept of sovereign states and diplomatic cooperation (Osiander, 2001). Following World War II, the establishment of the United Nations (UN) marked a pivotal moment, formalizing a commitment to collective action and shared responsibility (United Nations, 2024). Over the decades, multilateralism has evolved to encompass a broad range of issues, including trade, security, environmental protection, and human rights. However, today, it faces significant challenges: rising nationalism, geopolitical tensions, scepticism toward international institutions, and the increasing complexity of global issues (Sharma, 2023; Woods, 2024). Current talking points centre on reforming multilateral frameworks to enhance their effectiveness, inclusivity, and adaptability in a rapidly changing world (OECD, 2023; IMF, 2023).

The Group of Twenty (G20), comprising nineteen countries inclusive of the European Union and the African Union is a prime example of modern multilateralism in action (G20 South Africa, 2025). Representing the world's largest economies, the G20 plays a vital role in addressing pressing global challenges (World Bank, 2025). Initially established in 1999 as a forum for finance ministers and central bank governors, the G20 expanded its mandate in response to the 2008 financial crisis to include heads of state and government (Woods, 2024). This expansion underscored the need for coordinated policy responses to complex global issues. The G20 operates on the principle of consensus, aiming to promote international cooperation on trade, investment, climate change, and sustainable development. However, as a forum of powerful nations, the G20's actions and decisions significantly influence the trajectory of multilateral cooperation; its effectiveness, however, depends on addressing issues of representation, inclusivity, and accountability, ensuring that it truly reflects the diverse interests of the global community (Sharma, 2023; Drezner, 2022).

Chapter Four

The future of multilateralism hinges on its ability to adapt to evolving global challenges and maintain its relevance. In a world marked by increasing geopolitical tensions, shifting power dynamics, and complex issues such as climate change, pandemics, and technological disruptions, the need for coordinated action has never been greater (United Nations, 2024; IMF, 2023). Multilateralism must evolve beyond traditional state-centred approaches to include diverse stakeholders, such as civil society, the private sector, and academia. This requires fostering inclusive partnerships and promoting dialogue that transcends political boundaries. Furthermore, to strengthen multilateralism in the face of rising nationalism, international institutions must demonstrate their ability to deliver tangible benefits to citizens, addressing issues such as poverty, inequality, and insecurity. This calls for innovative approaches, including leveraging technology, promoting green economies, and adopting policies that prioritize inclusive and sustainable growth (Acharya, 2023; G20 India, 2023).

Within this complex global landscape, the G20 assumes a pivotal role in shaping the future of multilateralism (Woods, 2024). As a forum of leading economies, the G20 has the capacity to drive global policy agendas, mobilize resources, and broker agreements on critical issues. To effectively fulfil this role, the G20 must recommit to the principles of multilateral cooperation, prioritizing the interests of the global community over narrow national agendas. This includes fostering greater transparency and accountability in its decision-making processes, ensuring that its policies are aligned with sustainable development goals, and actively engaging with non-member states and civil society organizations. By demonstrating leadership and inclusivity, the G20 can help restore trust in multilateral institutions and pave the way for a more cooperative and prosperous future (World Bank, 2025; Acharya, 2023).

Ultimately, the success of multilateralism relies on the commitment of member states and their governments to uphold international norms and values. Governments must prioritize diplomacy, dialogue, and cooperation over unilateral actions, reaffirming their faith in the power of collective action. This requires a paradigm shift towards more inclusive and participatory governance, where citizens' voices are heard, and their concerns are addressed. Moreover, governments must invest in education, innovation, and infrastructure to strengthen resilience and promote long-term development. By fostering a culture of trust, respect,

and mutual understanding, governments can help create a world where multilateralism thrives and global challenges are effectively addressed (United Nations, 2024).

In conclusion, the future of multilateralism stands at a crossroads, facing unprecedented challenges yet holding immense potential (Drezner, 2022). By embracing innovation, prioritizing inclusion, and reaffirming their commitment to shared values, the G20 and its member states can help forge a new era of cooperation and prosperity. This requires a concerted effort to adapt international institutions, foster broad-based participation, and invest in sustainable solutions that benefit all members of the global community. It is time for a concerted action that inspires trust, fosters resilience, and ultimately builds a world where multilateralism is not just a concept but a lived reality for all citizens. The future is not predetermined; it is being shaped by the choices we make today. With visionary leadership and unwavering commitment, we can create a brighter tomorrow.

Conclusion and Summary

Sunday Israel Oyebamiji and Paul Kariuki

The journey through this anthology, *The G20 in Focus*, has shed light on the complexities, contradictions, and possibilities of Africa's engagement with one of the most influential global governance forums of our time, the Group of Twenty (G20). The chapters collectively highlight Africa's growing agency in shaping international discourse while underscoring the deep-seated structural barriers that continue to constrain the continent's full participation in the global economic order. As South Africa assumes the G20 chairship and the African Union joins as a permanent member, this anthology arrives at a critical juncture, one that calls for reflection, strategic engagement, and a renewed commitment to equity, justice, and sustainable development.

The essays presented in this collection approach the G20 from multiple vantage points, economic, political, social, and epistemological, yet they converge on a single premise: Africa's voice matters. The G20's legitimacy, relevance, and effectiveness increasingly depend on how well it integrates and responds to the aspirations of the Global South. The inclusion of African perspectives is not merely symbolic; it is essential for crafting global solutions that are equitable and sustainable. The discussions in this anthology demonstrate that Africa's engagement with the G20 is no longer peripheral. Instead, it represents a critical space where the continent can influence agendas, assert priorities, and advocate for transformative change in the structures of global governance.

Revisiting the G20: From Global Power to Shared Responsibility

The G20 was founded in response to the global financial crisis. Still, over the past two decades, it has evolved into a broad platform addressing not just finance but also trade, climate change, gender, digital transformation, and global inequality. Yet, as the chapters in this anthology reveal, the G20's expansion in scope has not necessarily been matched by inclusivity or accountability. Africa's underrepresentation within the G20 system has limited the

continent's influence over global decisions that directly affect its economic and social trajectories.

The contributions in *“The G20 in Focus”* call for a redefinition of what global leadership entails. True global governance, the authors argue, should not merely be about economic coordination among the most powerful states but about shared responsibility for humanity's collective future. The global financial and political architecture must reflect the principles of fairness, partnership, and inclusivity. The G20, therefore, must evolve from a club of elites into a platform for genuine dialogue that reflects the diversity of global experiences.

Africa's Economic and Developmental Realities

The first set of chapters, on financing, resilience, and global economic governance, reminds readers that Africa's developmental challenges are deeply intertwined with the global economy. The continent's debt burdens, dependence on commodity exports, and vulnerability to external shocks have often constrained its policy autonomy. Temidayo Ofusori's and Thelma Nyarhi's analyses emphasize that the G20 must prioritize structural reforms that allow developing nations to access concessional financing, manage debt sustainably, and adapt to climate change.

These contributions argue that Africa's economic vulnerability is not inevitable, but rather a consequence of systemic inequities within the global financial system. For decades, global institutions have prescribed austerity measures and conditionalities that have undermined Africa's developmental goals. The G20, with its influence over the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, has the potential to reshape these relationships by promoting fairer lending practices, supporting debt relief initiatives, and strengthening domestic resource mobilization mechanisms.

The authors also emphasize that resilience is not merely the ability to recover from crises, but the capacity to build systems that prevent crises from occurring in the first place. For Africa, this requires industrial diversification, regional integration, and investment in innovation and human capital. If the G20 is serious about “leaving no one behind,” it must reorient its frameworks to support these long-term priorities rather than short-term stabilization efforts.

Social Inclusion, Gender Equality, and Civil Society

The second group of chapters, on gender equality, labour markets, and social inclusion, extends the economic conversation into the social realm, emphasizing that sustainable growth is impossible without justice and inclusion. Thelma Nyarhi's examination of gender dynamics in African labour markets highlights persistent disparities in pay, employment opportunities, and representation in leadership. She argues that G20 policy frameworks must integrate gender-sensitive economic policies, not as add-ons but as central elements of growth strategies.

Sunday Israel Oyebamiji and Bongiwe Khumalo, in their respective chapters on civil society and citizen participation, highlight the indispensable role of civic engagement in democratizing global governance. They remind us that the G20's legitimacy depends on its responsiveness to the voices of ordinary citizens, not just governments. Civil society organizations (CSOs) act as bridges between policy elites and grassroots communities, translating abstract global policies into local realities and mobilizing accountability mechanisms.

South Africa's 2025 chairship provides a timely opportunity to foreground these issues. As Khumalo emphasizes, amplifying citizen voices can make the G20's work more tangible to African populations, transforming it from a distant diplomatic exercise into a participatory space for dialogue. The DDP's own engagement in fostering civic participation and democratic discourse aligns strongly with this vision, underscoring the importance of connecting global governance with local democracy.

Digital Transformation and Knowledge Justice

The third theme of the anthology explores digital transformation and knowledge systems, areas that represent both opportunities and risks for Africa. The continent is currently witnessing a rapid digital revolution, driven by innovations in fintech, e-commerce, and renewable energy technologies. However, as Temidayo Ofusori argues, this transformation is uneven and marked by profound digital divides.

Africa's engagement with the G20 on digital issues must be guided by the twin goals of inclusion and sovereignty. While digitalization can enhance productivity, education, and connectivity,

it also raises concerns about data governance, privacy, and dependency on global tech monopolies. The G20's Digital Economy Task Force, in which South Africa has played a key role, provides a platform for advocating for fair digital policies that empower African states to harness technology for inclusive development.

Equally significant is the call to decolonize knowledge systems. Ofusori's essay on amplifying African knowledge systems in G20 policy debates challenges the Eurocentric epistemologies that dominate global decision-making. He argues that African indigenous knowledge, with its emphasis on community, sustainability, and interdependence, offers valuable insights into solving global problems. Integrating these perspectives is not only a matter of cultural recognition but also a practical necessity for building truly sustainable models of governance and development.

The intersection of digital transformation and knowledge justice presents a new frontier for Africa's global engagement. By combining technological innovation with indigenous wisdom, Africa can contribute unique solutions to challenges such as food insecurity, health crises, and climate change. The G20 provides a venue where these alternative frameworks can be articulated, shared, and adopted on a global scale.

South Africa's Role and Leadership

The final section of the anthology focuses on South Africa's strategic role within the G20. As both a national actor and a continental representative, South Africa occupies a complex and delicate position. Sunday Israel Oyebamiji's and Thelma Nyarhi's analyses reveal the tensions inherent in balancing national interests with continental responsibilities. South Africa's participation in the G20 is not only a matter of diplomacy but also one of representation, ensuring that African priorities are effectively communicated and integrated into global decision-making.

The chapters also emphasize the role of South Africa's intellectual and policy communities, think tanks, universities, and research institutions, in shaping the national and continental agenda. These knowledge actors play a vital role in policy formulation, advocacy, and accountability, ensuring that G20 engagements are informed by evidence-based research.

Equally important is the moral and social dimension of leadership, explored in Bongiwe Khumalo's essay on interfaith organizations. In a world increasingly fragmented by inequality and conflict, faith-based organizations can play a crucial role in fostering dialogue, promoting reconciliation, and upholding ethical governance. Their participation underscores that global cooperation is not only a political or economic endeavour but also a moral one.

South Africa's 2025 chairship represents a defining moment. It offers the country and the continent a chance to influence the G20's agenda in ways that prioritize inclusivity, justice, and sustainable development. As the only African member with a seat at both the G20 and BRICS, South Africa can help bridge the gap between the Global North and South, facilitating conversations that align economic recovery with social justice and ecological sustainability.

Key Insights and Future Directions

The essays in *The G20 in Focus* collectively provide valuable insights for both scholarship and policy. They make clear that Africa's engagement with the G20 must be multidimensional, addressing not only economic structures but also the social, digital, and epistemic dimensions of development.

Several lessons emerge:

- First, Africa must continue to strengthen its collective voice. The inclusion of the African Union in the G20 is a significant milestone; however, meaningful participation requires effective coordination among African states and institutions. The AU, NEPAD, and regional blocs like SADC and ECOWAS must work collaboratively to develop unified positions on global issues.
- Second, inclusivity must become the guiding principle of G20 reforms. This includes achieving gender parity, promoting youth engagement, and involving marginalised communities. Global governance that excludes the majority of the world's population cannot claim legitimacy.
- Third, knowledge production must be diversified. African scholars, researchers, and think tanks need to assert intellectual sovereignty by generating frameworks and theories that speak to local realities while influencing global debates.
- Fourth, partnerships between governments, civil society, and academia are essential. The Democracy Development Program

(DDP) exemplifies how such collaborations can foster informed dialogue and public engagement on international issues.

Towards a Just and Inclusive Global Order

In conclusion, *The G20 in Focus* offers both critique and hope. It critiques the persistent inequities in global governance while offering a vision for a more just and inclusive world. The anthology shows that Africa is not waiting to be invited to the global table; it is already shaping the agenda, contributing ideas, and challenging power hierarchies.

As the world navigates multiple crises, economic uncertainty, climate change, pandemics, and geopolitical instability, the need for inclusive cooperation has never been greater. The G20 has the potential to be a platform where collective solutions are forged, but only if it listens to all voices, especially those from the Global South.

The Democracy Development Program (DDP) believes that democracy and development are inextricably linked to global justice. Through this project, DDP reaffirms its commitment to empowering citizens, promoting civic participation, and building bridges between local realities and global decision-making.

Ultimately, *The G20 in Focus* is both a reflection of Africa's journey and a roadmap for its future engagement with the world. It calls on policymakers, scholars, and citizens alike to reimagine global governance, not as a system that perpetuates inequality, but as one that embodies solidarity, justice, and shared humanity.

If the G20 is to remain relevant in the twenty-first century, it must heed this call. Africa's inclusion is not a matter of charity or diplomacy; it is a matter of necessity. The future of global governance will depend on how well the world learns to listen, collaborate, and build together.

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About the Book

The G20 in Focus: An Anthology of African Analyses, Priorities, and Pathways brings together a collection of essays that examine Africa's engagement with one of the world's most influential platforms for global governance, the Group of Twenty (G20). The anthology is a product of the Democracy Development Program (DDP), developed with the continued support of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS).

At a time when South Africa holds the G20 chair and the African Union has been elevated to a permanent member, this book offers a vital African perspective on global economic cooperation, policy reform, and inclusive development. It examines the G20's role in addressing key issues, including financing for development, gender equality, digital transformation, civic participation, and Africa's representation in international decision-making.

The eleven essays featured in the anthology are written by emerging and established African scholars and practitioners who analyse the G20 through multidisciplinary lenses, including political science, economics, gender studies, and development. Together, they reflect on the challenges and opportunities that Africa faces in shaping a fair and sustainable global order.

By centring African voices, *The G20 in Focus* contributes to the democratization of global policy discourse. It underscores Africa's agency as a producer of knowledge, a catalyst for global innovation, and a strategic actor in reimagining the future of international cooperation.

This anthology serves not only as a scholarly resource but also as a call to action for policymakers, academics, and citizens to promote inclusive governance and equitable partnerships within the G20 and beyond.

