



# G20

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### Recalibrating Global Solidarity: The G20 in the Era of U.S. Retrenchment

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This paper examines the evolving dynamics of global solidarity in the context of U.S. retrenchment from international engagement, as evidenced by its approach to the G20. With South Africa's presidency setting a solidarity-driven agenda, the study highlights early resistance from the United States, marked by high-profile actions such as Secretary of State Marco Rubio's boycott and the suspension of USAID programs. These developments signal a significant shift in U.S. foreign policy away from traditional multilateral support frameworks.

South Africa's presidency of the G20 has got off to a rocky start under the banner of solidarity, equality, and sustainability. However, it has faced early resistance, particularly from the United States. Secretary of State [Marco Rubio](#) in a statement on X, dismissed South Africa's stance as anti-American, criticizing its emphasis on solidarity and sustainability as ideological tools. He further signaled U.S. disengagement by refusing to attend the G20 foreign ministers' summit and dismantling USAID programs. These moves underscore a broader shift in U.S. foreign policy—one that challenges the relevance of international solidarity frameworks. The absence of the United States from these discussions raises critical questions: Can global cooperation thrive without U.S. involvement? Can the international community develop a framework for solidarity that is not reliant on American leadership?

### Trump's Vision of USAID and its Purpose

Donald Trump has been a long critic of [global governance](#) that he thinks is contrary to U.S. interests. [Marco Rubio](#), the U.S. Secretary of State, condemned the South African government's actions regarding the land expropriation of white settlers in his first statement, and he did not attend the G20 summit. Following this, the [second Trump administration imposed sanctions](#) on South Africa due to human rights violations [and attacked allies of the U.S. like Israel](#). Additionally, the U.S. government suspended all American aid—except for military aid—for 90 days. Today, we do not know to what extent this affects the [healthcare](#) and food programs currently operating in Africa. One thing is certain: the American message is clear—the United States will not represent so-called solidarity in the coming years, as the current U.S. leadership believes that [aid-industrial complex](#) has been built on this, and development and support funds have gone to countries hostile to American interests. Moreover, the G20 forum is a platform for countries that, from the Trump administration's perspective, have sought [to weaken the United States](#) over the past decades. In the long run, the strategical absence of American Secretary of State aims to diminish the legitimacy of such forums like G20.

## Africa's Dilemma Between Mineral Nationalism And Foreign Aid

As the United States has implemented significant cuts to its foreign aid programs, including USAID, critical support for health and development initiatives across Africa has been [severely disrupted](#). Apart from the obvious negative consequences, the cuts to USAID are expected to have significant implications for [resource nationalism](#) in Africa, [intensifying](#) the continent's desire to take more control of its abundant natural resources. The African continent has experienced [two waves of resource nationalism](#); the first wave (the 1960s and 1970s), focused on nationalizing foreign mining assets and creating state-controlled mineral agencies, and the second wave (beginning in the late 2000s) taking a more restrained approach by focusing on increased taxation, better regulatory oversight, and developing economic linkages. In the emerging third wave, African nations may need to rely more on alternate funding sources in order to sustain their resource exploitation and beneficiation plans (such as collaborations with [China](#)). In addition to raising tensions with long-standing international allies and drawing criticism for protectionist measures, such a trend may restrict foreign investment, which in turn could hasten the desire for economic independence. Hence, the hopes and stakes are high – also in terms of the future of resource nationalism – across the African subcontinent regarding the South African presidency of the G20, especially with South African president Cyril Ramaphosa having [stated](#) that '[w]e will use this G20 to champion the use of critical minerals as an engine for growth and development in Africa.'

## Asia's Fragmented Approach to Global Solidarity

Dissension and dispersion have always been the sins of non-consolidation in Asia, even though it was the first to initiate a global project of solidarity and cooperation. The historical origin of the concept of [South-South cooperation](#) is the Bandung Conference of 1955, which was convened during the Cold War. The conference laid the groundwork for initiatives that were designed to promote economic growth and development. Nevertheless, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members of the OECD have been the primary contributors to international development since that time. Nevertheless, the BRICS countries have recently emerged as significant [“non-traditional” donor countries](#), with the objective of challenging the Western dominance in international development aid initiatives, following the emergence of the Global South.

One of the primary terms used at the [BRICS summit](#), which is intended to enhance South-South cooperation, is “solidarity.” However, the donor activities of each member are in accordance with those of the OECD in that [they are intended to advance the national and geoeconomic interests](#) of the donor countries. Russia is involved in the sectors of education and health, India is involved in the ICT sector, and China is predominantly focused on infrastructure development. Nevertheless, these initiatives are not voluntary. In comparison to the donor activities of the DAC members, the contribution of the BRICS countries is relatively minimal. However, the BRICS members should not take the DAC principles, which stipulate that aid should be directly linked to the local economy, into account, as this could lead to the development of new forms of dependency that surpass the issue of solidarity.

## Europe's Global Aid - An Unflexed Muscle?

Despite being a major global donor (providing over €50 billion a year to promote global development), the EU's approach to global aid has been criticized for its patronizing tone and misaligned priorities, which undermine its influence in the Global South. Even former European Council President Charles Michel [highlighted](#) the EU's tendency to "lecture" partner countries, noting that this approach often alienates potential allies. In contrast, nations such as China or Russia engage in infrastructure development without imposing ideological conditions, making them more attractive partners for developing countries. This disparity suggests that the EU's communication strategy lacks the respect and understanding needed to foster genuine partnerships in the Global South.

Furthermore, the EU's distribution of aid has been scrutinized for inefficiency and ethical concerns. Reports suggest that funds from the EU Trust Fund for Africa have been allocated to [projects](#) with questionable impacts on migration, and in some cases have been linked to human rights abuses. Such missteps not only fail to address the root causes of issues such as irregular migration but also tarnish the EU's reputation as a benevolent actor. In addition, the EU's aid commitments are often [perceived](#) as insufficient in relation to the huge needs of developing regions. While substantial resources are pledged, the actual impact is diluted by bureaucratic inefficiencies and a lack of coherent strategy, leading to unmet development goals and growing skepticism among aid recipients. The EU must therefore take a critical look at its aid policy. Adopting a more collaborative and respectful approach and aligning aid initiatives with the real needs of developing countries are essential steps. Such reforms are essential if the EU is to enhance its soft power, reaffirm its commitment to global development and finally flex its real economic muscle.

## Latin America's Diverging Views on the G20

Of the G20 countries, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico together [represent](#) close to 60 percent of Latin America's population and nearly 70 percent of its combined GDP. Interestingly, their approach to G20 is rather different, as these three countries are growing apart in the way their governments react to competition and development in the international arena: in the case of Brazil, we can see the utmost belief in and commitment to South Africa's G20 mission as it stands in parity with Lula's domestic programs of social inclusion, sustainability and global reforms. Brazil's devotion to BRICS naturally forms a closer bond with Pretoria. Argentina vehemently opposes several socioeconomic reforms promoted by, among others South Africa and Brazil, such as taxing the billionaires, reforming the UN, or even hate speech regulations in the media. Under Milei, the South American country views G20 in a sceptical way, calls it interventionist as it goes against domestic policies and reforms the new president successfully implemented. Mexico stands somewhere between the two Latin American countries. While on paper it agrees with several G20 programs of South Africa and its liberal partners, the reality of economic (inter)dependency with Trump's USA keeps Mexico City in a cautious position.

## **The Future of Global Solidarity**

The [absence](#) of Secretary of State Marco Rubio at the G20 meeting in Pretoria was more than symbolic—it was a strategic statement. It raised doubts about the long-term viability of global institutions that rely on American participation. The G20 meeting failed to produce concrete responses to the Trump administration's withdrawal from multilateral engagement, implicitly acknowledging inefficiencies within the current international aid system. While leaders such as [Ramaphosa](#) continue to champion multilateralism, consensus remains elusive. With the EU, GCC, India, China, and BRICS+ all playing major donor roles, the question remains: Can global solidarity function effectively without the United States? The answer remains uncertain, but if reform and coordination do not materialize, skepticism will only deepen.

