POLICY NOTE

NO PROSPERITY WITHOUT STABILITY: THE G20'S GROWTH AGENDA RUNS THROUGH AFRICA'S CONFLICT ZONES

Chandrima Das, Stimson Center
Désiré Assogbavi, Open Society Foundations

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No Prosperity Without Stability: The G20's Growth Agenda Runs Through Africa's Conflict Zones

Chandrima Das, *Stimson Center*

Désiré Assogbavi, *Open Society Foundations*

As the United States hosts the G20 this year in Miami, Florida, there have been geopolitical shifts across the globe and new conflicts, including Iran and Venezuela, driving the largest number of all types of conflicts since 1946 to 65[1]. Also, in 2025, there were 75 non-state conflicts, "resulting in approximately 14,500 battle-related deaths," with Africa having "the highest levels of non-state violence."[2] Non-state conflicts are defined as conflicts between non-state armed groups, rebel groups, criminal organizations, and ethnic groups resulting in more than 25 deaths a year.[3] The rise in conflict across the globe has an economic impact on G20 countries: "violence cost the global economy US$21.8 trillion."[4] This means conflict costs each person in the world US$2,657 more a year. In one year, military expenditure increased by 2.9% in 2025 to US$2.8 trillion.[5] The cost of conflict has grown exponentially for G20 countries that are the main donor countries for humanitarian assistance. Peacekeeping and peacebuilding is .05% of the global military budget of US$49.2 billion a year. With the inconsistent financial strains on emerging economies due to recovery from COVID-19, the wars in Ukraine and Iran are disproportionately "hardening inflationary pressures, driving up energy and food costs."[6]

The G20 responded to these pressures with an emphasis on economic empowerment, social cohesion, and climate resilience, as the last four G20 Presidencies were hosted by Global South leaders: Indonesia, India, Brazil, and South Africa. However, this was met with resistance from the U.S., as shown by Secretary of State Marco Rubio boycotting the G20 meeting in South Africa. Further political pressures with South Africa resulted in the U.S. not inviting South Africa to participate in the U.S.-hosted meetings this year.[7]

Despite strains with South Africa, efforts by the Global South are aligned with the U.S. G20 Presidency to pivot "back to basics". This means the U.S. G20 prioritizes core economic issues, "unleashing economic prosperity by limiting regulatory burdens; unlocking reliable and affordable energy options; and pioneering new innovative technologies."[8] Beyond economic stability, the U.S. has used "back to basics" for the UN to ensure it focuses on peace and security issues. Investing in conflict prevention, stabilization, and peacebuilding in Africa serves U.S. economic and national security interests as well as the G20. The U.S. remains the largest donor to humanitarian assistance,

[1] Semafor: Conflicts at highest level since WWII , June 10, 2026, https://www.semafor.com/article/06/10/2026/conflicts-at-highest-level-since-wwii
[2] Conflict trends: A global overview, 1946–2025; 2026, https://www.prio.org/publications/14802.
[3] Our World in Data: Deaths in non-state conflicts based on where they occurred2025; November 1, 2026, https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/deaths-in-non-state-conflicts
[4] Peacenews, Peace Under Threat: Insights From the 2026 Global Peace Index, September 23, 2026, https://peacenews.com/peace-under-threat-insights-from-the-2026-global-peace-index/.
[5] SIPRI: Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2025, September 23, 2026, *https://www.sipri.org/publications/2026/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2025*
[6] Council of Foreign Relations: What Does the G20 Do?; November 18, 2025, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/what-does-g20-do#chapter-whats-been-on-its-agenda.
[7] Ibid.
[8] G20 Priorities, October 26, 2026; https://g20.org/#us-g20-priorities

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global health, and migration in Africa. In 2025, the U.S. claimed it invested US$5.35 billion in health, US$4.3 billion in peace and security, and US$3.3 billion in humanitarian assistance.[9] It is important to note that Africa contributes more than US$39.5 billion to the U.S. economy, providing critical minerals in support of innovation, technology and AI, agriculture, and textiles.[10] Continued U.S. investment demonstrates its desire to see stability in the region to promote further economic gains. The G20 is not a peace and security body, so it should not seek to compete with the United Nations Security Council or the African Union Peace and Security Council. Its influence comes from its members' weight in global trade, development finance, commodity markets, and international financial institutions, whose decisions shape debt restructuring, infrastructure investment, energy supply chains, cross-border payments, and illicit financial flows. In fragile settings, each of these policy areas can support peace or help finance conflict.

To provide a broader-based voice to these global conversations, the African Union's (AU) admission as a permanent G20 member in September 2023 corrected a long-standing anomaly: Africa's continental body now has a seat in the forum where the largest economies coordinate on growth, debt, and financial stability. The opportunity now is to turn representation into influence. That requires the AU to bring clear, continental positions to the table and G20 members to treat it as an institutional partner, including when African conflicts have not yet reached the front pages.[11]

This argument fits the goals of the 2026 U.S. Presidency, which has focused the G20's agenda on economic growth and prosperity. Its priorities include energy security, innovation, debt transparency, debt restructuring, and more efficient cross-border payments. Conflict directly frustrates those goals. It destroys productive assets, fragments markets, raises transport and insurance costs, displaces workers and diverts public spending from services to security. A growth strategy that ignores fragility will underperform in conflict-affected countries and in the neighboring economies that absorb refugees and disrupt trade.[12]

African Institutions and the Financing Gap

The AU budget is to support 55 countries, including peace and security on the continent, yet only 17 countries contribute to this budget.[13] The AU's projected regular budget for 2027 is US$707.8 million. Within the regular budget, US$190 million is allocated to operational costs, US$309.9 million to programs, and US$207.9 million to peace-support operations. Member States' assessed contributions remain capped at US$200 million.

Peace and security financing remains particularly dependent on external support. International partners are expected to provide US$197.9 million, or approximately 95% of the peace-support operations budget. The remaining US$10 million will come from interest generated by the AU Peace Fund.

The AU has developed a continental peace and security architecture that combines political legitimacy with regional knowledge. The Peace and Security Council, Continental Early Warning

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[9] U.S. State Department, Sub-Saharan Africa, October 26, 2026; https://foreignassistance.gov/

[10] Exploring Emerging Trade Opportunities: African Exports to the USA in 2024-2025; February 2025; https://storage.googleapis.com/export-hunter-reports-prod/static/news-insights-docs/US-Africa-Exports-Opportunities.pdf.

[11]. African Union, 'African Union Becomes Permanent Member of the G20,' 9 September 2023, https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20230909/african-union-becomes-permanent-member-g20.

[12]. U.S. Department of the Treasury, 'Secretary Bessent Announces 2026 G20 Finance Track Agenda,' 19 February 2026, https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0398 ; and G20 United States, 'U.S. G20 Priorities,' 2026, https://g20.org/g20-united-states/.

[13] The funding of the AU from member states is a 'farce', Mo Ibrahim, June 10, 2025, https://amaniafrica-et.org/the-funding-of-the-au-from-member-states-is-a-farce-mo-ibrahim/

System, Panel of the Wise, mediation mechanisms, and peace-support operations give it tools that external actors cannot reproduce. The AU's performance has been uneven, partly because Member States are divided and decisions are not always implemented. The most persistent constraint, however, is predictable finance. Mediation and prevention often struggle for modest resources, while far larger sums become available after violence has escalated.

Two mechanisms could begin to change that pattern. The AU Peace Fund was established with a target endowment of US$400 million to support mediation, institutional readiness, and peace-support operations. The panel reviewing the African Peace and Security Architecture proposed raising its capitalization to US$1 billion, though Member States were not enthusiastic. UN Security Council Resolution 2719 subsequently created a framework through which eligible AU-led operations may receive up to 75% of their annual budgets from UN assessed contributions, subject to case-by-case authorization and agreed safeguards. The framework has promise, but each mission still requires political agreement, credible design, and financing for the remaining costs. G20 members can prioritize political and financial investments in these mechanisms to build a more peaceful continent where economic growth and prosperity can support stability in line with the U.S. priorities.

Key Crises with Wider Economic Consequences

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and the central Sahel differ in history and political economy. However, they expose the same policy weakness in those countries and regions. Long-term policy decisions on public finance, regional trade, resource governance, and institutional legitimacy are poorly connected to immediate-term emergency diplomacy and humanitarian relief decisions. Conflict damages economies, and the resulting distress weakens states and communities, creating fresh opportunities for armed groups.

The scale is no longer marginal to global economic governance. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre recorded 31.7 million internally displaced people in sub-Saharan Africa at the end of 2025, nearly 40% of the global total. In Sudan, 33.7 million people were projected to need humanitarian assistance in 2026. UNHCR reported 8.2 million displaced people in the DRC by September 2025 and projected that the number could reach 9 million by the end of 2026. Across the wider Sahel, almost 5 million people have been forcibly displaced. Behind these figures are lost schooling, disrupted production, pressure on host communities and fiscal demands on governments with little room to borrow.[14][15][16][17]

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Eastern DRC demonstrates why peace, diplomacy, and economic governance must be designed together. The conflict connects the Congolese state, the M23 movement, other armed groups, neighboring governments, and commercial networks in one of the world's most important mineral regions. The 2025 escalation changed the military balance and heightened the risk of a wider regional confrontation. African, Qatari, and U.S.-supported initiatives have opened negotiating

[14]United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'Sahel Emergency,' updated 2026, https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/sahel-emergency.
[15]United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'DR Congo Emergency,' updated 2026, https://www.unhcr.org/us/emergencies/dr-congo-emergency.
[16] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Global Humanitarian Overview 2026: Sudan, December 2025, https://humanitarianaction.info/.
[17] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Global Report on Internal Displacement 2026 (Geneva: IDMC, 2026), https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2026/.

channels, but parallel processes will remain fragile unless they reinforce a common political framework.

A durable settlement must address more than relations between national capitals. It needs verifiable security arrangements, civilian protection, humanitarian access, the safe return of displaced people, and credible monitoring. It must also confront local disputes over land, citizenship, political representation, and community security. Congolese civil society, women's organizations, and affected communities should help design and monitor the settlement rather than being consulted after decisions are made.

Mineral governance is part of the peace equation. Tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold move through formal and informal regional supply chains. Traceability rules have improved parts of the market but have not ended smuggling, predatory taxation, or armed-group financing. G20 members include major consumer markets, processors, investors and financial centers. They can strengthen supply-chain due diligence, exchange customs and beneficial-ownership information, act against entities credibly linked to conflict financing, and support lawful regional trade that returns revenue to producing communities.

Sudan

After decades of Omar al-Bashir's rule, he was ousted in 2019, and there was brief civilian rule. However, in April 2023, the Sudan conflict escalated into further conflict between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and a paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), vying for power, creating the largest humanitarian crisis in the world.[18] The humanitarian needs for reaching 33 million people in crisis costs US$2.9 billion, of which a majority of G20 countries are meeting an estimated US$1.8 billion[19] of those needs. The gravity of the situation continues as countries like the United Arab Emirates continue to profit from illicit gold mining and continue to support the RSF.[20] Not only is this costing lives, but the war has decimated any legitimate economic viability.

A 2025 report demonstrates that the Sudan conflict, ensuing further instability in the region, costs the continent of Africa billions of dollars in opportunities, including trade with neighboring countries, the complete halt of the oil infrastructure, diminished agriculture industry, and rise in unemployment and poverty, is costing the continent US$26 billion.[21] The stalemate in the political process and peace agreement has economic effects on the G20 countries. These nations have an opportunity to engage politically and economically to promote peacekeeping and peacebuilding to stop the bleeding and prevent further economic collapse in the region.

The Sahel

The central Sahel presents a different institutional challenge. More than a decade of counterterrorism operations has not prevented armed groups from expanding across parts of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and now toward coastal West Africa. Military takeovers have narrowed political space, while the three countries' withdrawal from the Economic Community of West

[18] CFR: Civil War in Sudan, August 26, 2026, https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/power-struggle-sudan
[19] Reuters: Countries pledge nearly $1.8 billion to ease Sudan hunger crisis, April 15, 2026, https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/germany-provide-further-236-million-aid-sudan-this-year-2026-04-15/
[20] How Congress Can Help Curb the UAE's Role in Sudan's Crisis, Marc 18, 2025, https://www.americanprogress.org/article/how-congress-can-help-curb-the-uaes-role-in-sudans-crisis/).
[21] Sudan's war is an economic disaster: Here's how bad it could get, July 28,2025, https://ssa.foodsecurityportal.org/node/3674.

African States and the consolidation of the Alliance of Sahel States have complicated cooperation on trade, mobility, diplomacy, and security.

States must protect communities from armed groups, but military operations detached from accountable government, local conflict resolution, and essential services can deepen grievances. Economic policy should focus on areas where livelihoods and public authority are under the greatest pressure. Climate-resilient agriculture, pastoral systems, decentralized energy, feeder roads, and local services can reduce the isolation that armed groups exploit. Such investments will not defeat insurgencies on their own. They can, however, make public institutions more useful and legitimate in people's daily lives.

This ungoverned space has become a safe haven for extremists that transcends national borders and creates a humanitarian crisis and mass displacement, pushing people towards Europe and furthering global insecurity.[22] In addition, the economic impact on G20 countries includes illicit economies from mining and extraction of gold to arms and narcotics trafficking,[23] all contributing to criminality in the region and G20 countries.[24]

Recommendations

When G20 leaders meet in Miami this December, they must discuss investment in addressing these conflicts. As outlined above, the consequences extend beyond humanitarian suffering: disruptions to oil production and access to critical minerals, along with the spread of extremism, have global repercussions and impose financial costs on G20 countries. Conflict carries costs for everyone. The following four recommendations aim to prioritize Africa and advance a more prosperous future.

Four Actions for the G20

First, the G20 should screen its own initiatives for conflict risk. Energy, infrastructure, and critical-mineral investments already depend on sourcing and transport through fragile settings. A standing assessment, drawing on AU and UN early-warning analysis, would make those risks visible before financing decisions are taken. This would require further investment by G20 countries in multilateral mechanisms such as the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, a complex risk analytics fund, and other tools to support early warning and assess whether regions are stable and supportive for G20 investments. These investments would ensure political stability in a region and support further economic stability and growth.

Second, G20 members should use their political will to help operationalize predictable financing for AU-led peace operations under UN Security Council Resolution 2719. This would mean reaching an agreement on suitable missions, supporting credible planning and oversight, and closing the gap of costs not covered through UN assessed contributions. As the notion "African solutions for African problems" resonates with G20 members, deploying UNSCR 2719 would support capacity building and funding to address insecurity in the region. As conflicts continue to spill over into regional issues, this mechanism would empower the African Union to use its robust tools to address the insecurity. G20 investments could help create an economic incentive for spoilers to resist return.

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[22] Council on Foreign Relations: Violent Extremism in the Sahel, October14, 2026, https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel#chapter-recommended-resources

[23] Tripp, Alexander, The Sahel is now an epicenter of drug smuggling. That is terrible news for everyone, The Atlantic Council, September 18, 2024; https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/africasource/the-sahel-is-now-an-epicenter-of-drug-smuggling-that-is-terrible-news-for-everyone/

[24] ISS: PSC Report: Illicit activities fuel extremism in the Sahel's conflict zones, July 2, 2025, https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/illicit-activities-fuel-extremism-in-the-sahel-s-conflict-zones.

Third, the G20 Africa Engagement Framework (AEF) was endorsed by the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank of Governors in 2025, which focused on institutional and governance architecture and enhancing private sector finance.[25] For this to succeed, the framework should be implemented to ensure greater private-sector accountability to protect concessional finance and essential social expenditure in countries facing conflict and debt distress. It should also support customs cooperation, beneficial-ownership disclosure and anti-money-laundering systems capable of tracing the gold, minerals, fuel and financial flows that sustain armed actors.

Fourth, during the G20 Presidency hosted by South Africa, the leaders discussed *The Ubuntu Approach: Moving Together,* which highlights collaboration between nations to address cross-border issues. This concept has helped accelerate cross-border infrastructure projects across the continent, including the U.S. investment in the Lobito Corridor, an "infrastructure initiative linking the port of Lobito on Angola's Atlantic coast to Zambia through the Democratic Republic of Congo." This initiative complements the G7 investment of a 350-mile rail line from Zambia to southern DRC. These investments are aiming to support economic inroads, diversify supply chains for critical minerals, and open up the region for further G20 investments.[26] These trade corridors should be treated as shared economic and security infrastructure. Financing roads, railways, and ports without protecting surrounding communities or ensuring local benefits can create assets that armed groups tax rather than help economies that grow. Corridor investments should therefore include accountable security arrangements, local employment and cross-border mechanisms for resolving disputes.

Conclusion

A Practical Division of Labor

The G20 will not mediate in Goma, Khartoum or Bamako. The AU and African regional institutions should provide political ownership and contextual knowledge, while the UN supplies international legal authority, humanitarian coordination and peacebuilding expertise. The G20 should use the economic instruments its members control: debt policy, development finance, trade standards, financial transparency, accountability and supply-chain governance to foster more economic and political stability.

The G20 U.S. Presidency has recognized the importance of creating stability in Africa through its investment in addressing Ebola in DRC[27] and its condemnation of forced labor[28] in the supply chain. The U.S. prioritizing these issues shows an understanding of how these issues contribute to the instability in the region. The division of labor between the G20 and the UN serves the U.S. Presidency's stated goal in promoting global economic prosperity. Conflict in the DRC, Sudan, and the Sahel already imposes costs on energy supplies, mineral sourcing, and trade corridors used by G20 economies. As President Trump continues to state that he is a President of Peace, he has demonstrated his continued support for the U.S. Global Fragility Act (GFA), funded by Congress at

[25] Africa's G20 Johannesburg Summit 2025; December 5, 2025; https://www.un.org/osaa/en/news/africa-g20

[26] Sara Way, Atlantic Council;What to know about the Lobito Corridor—and how it may change how minerals move; December 20, 2024, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/africasource/what-to-know-about-the-lobito-corridor-and-how-it-may-change-how-minerals-move/

[27] G20 Chair's Statement: Ebola Ministerial on Accelerating Collective Action to Defeat Ebola, September 30, 2026, https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesman/2026/09/g20-chairs-statement-ebola-ministerial-on-accelerating-collective-action-to-defeat-ebola/

[28] Ambassador Greer Commends Trade Ministers Signing on to Statement Eliminating Forced Labor in Global Supply Chains, October 2, 2026, https://ustr.gov/about/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2026/october/ambassador-greer-commends-trade-ministers-signing-statement-eliminating-forced-labor-global-supply

US$1.15 billion and enacted in 2019 to make a concerted effort on conflict prevention and stabilization.[29] In the first two years of the implementation of GFA, an investment of US$358 million in the prevention and stabilization targeted funds resulted in less intercommunal violence in coastal West Africa, supported the acceleration of economic growth in Libya, and promoted commerce by expanding the airport in Libya. This demonstrates that U.S. engagement in conflict prevention aligns with U.S. priorities at the G20.[30] The choice is whether the G20 invests deliberately in conditions for peace or continues to absorb the much greater costs of instability.[31]

[29] Alliance for Peacebuilding, October 2026, https://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/globalfragilityact

[30] CFR, *The Global Fragility Act Is a Model for Cost-Effective Foreign Assistance, June 16, 2025,* https://www.cfr.org/articles/global-fragility-act-model-cost-effective-foreign-assistance

[31] United States Congress, Global Fragility Act of 2019, Title V of the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Pub. L. No. 116-94; Council on Foreign Relations, 'The Global Fragility Act Is a Model for Cost-Effective Foreign Assistance,' 2025, https://www.cfr.org/articles/global-fragility-act-model-cost-effective-foreign-assistance.