

Program

The Future of Digital Finance

Emerging opportunities
in India, in China and
on the African continent

Virtual Conference
September 24-25, 2025

Centre for International
Governance Innovation

T20  SOUTH
AFRICA
2025

About CIGI

The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) is an independent, non-partisan think tank whose peer-reviewed research and trusted analysis influence policy makers to innovate. Our global network of multidisciplinary researchers and strategic partnerships provide policy solutions for the digital era with one goal: to improve people's lives everywhere. Headquartered in Waterloo, Canada, CIGI has received support from the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario and founder Jim Balsillie.

About the T20

The Think 20 (T20) is an official engagement group of the G20. It consists of a dynamic network of research institutes and experts from across the world who provide vital input into G20 processes.

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Overview

Recent years have witnessed the rapid evolution of digital payment systems worldwide. In particular, the African continent, India and China have emerged as vibrant testing grounds for innovation — each charting unique paths to expand financial access, enhance transaction efficiency and explore new technologies, such as central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) and blockchain. At the same time, geopolitical considerations and alternative payment infrastructures are reshaping the contours of international finance, challenging the dominance of traditional systems such as the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) and the role of the US dollar.

Against this backdrop, the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) is hosting a conference to delve into the future of digital payments across these three regions, examining regulatory collaboration, global governance, financial inclusion and technical advancements in cross-border payments. The event will convene policy makers, industry experts, academics and civil society stakeholders to exchange insights, identify synergies and propose actionable policy solutions. This conference is an official T20 side event.

Objectives

The objectives of the virtual conference are as follows:

- Examine the geopolitics of alternative payment systems, focusing on how emerging platforms impact existing networks such as SWIFT, the global monetary order, and the potential risks and benefits of a multipolar or fragmented payment landscape.
- Foster regulatory cooperation, highlighting how different regions, each experimenting with regulatory

sandboxes, can collaborate on wholesale CBDCs, tokenization and digital asset regulations; and identifying best practices for cross-jurisdictional coordination that balance innovation, stability and consumer protection.

- Promote financial inclusion, aligning with the Group of Twenty (G20) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) frameworks to examine how digital payments and digital assets can rapidly expand financial access to unbanked and underbanked populations, showcasing success stories and challenges from Africa, India and China to inform targeted policy interventions.
- Assess technological advancements, exploring the impacts of blockchain, distributed ledger technologies (DLTs) and cloud computing on cross-border payments, and investigating cutting-edge digital payment innovations and their implications for interoperability and cyber resilience.

Policy Areas

The conference will focus on four key policy areas:

- **Geopolitics of Alternative Digital Payment Systems:** The focus will be on mBridge, BRICS Pay and their implications for currency competition, potential de-dollarization trends and the resilience of SWIFT-based networks.
- **Regulatory Cooperation and Experimentation with Tokenization:** The focus will be on different sandbox approaches in Asia and Africa, testing wholesale CBDC prototypes, cross-border settlement via tokenized assets and shared-risk frameworks.
- **Digital Payments and Financial Inclusion:** The focus will be on how the G20 and the SDGs agendas intersect with

rapid adoption of mobile money, digital banking and digital assets, effectively bringing underserved communities into the formal financial sector.

- **Technological Innovations in Cross-Border Payments:** The focus will be on technical underpinnings of blockchain, DLT, cloud services and artificial intelligence (AI)-driven compliance solutions shaping the future of cost-effective, secure cross-border payments.

Format

The conference will have two keynote sessions, four panel sessions and a fireside chat. This event will be held virtually and is open to the public.

Housekeeping Notes

- The session will be recorded.
- If you have any technical difficulties, please contact Anne Blayney, senior events planner, at ablayney@cigionline.org.
- Please identify yourself in Zoom by your first name, last name and organization (for example, “Paul Samson, CIGI”).
- During the discussions, please use the Q&A box to include any questions you may have.

Agenda

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

7:00-7:15 a.m.

Opening Remarks and Keynote

- **Paul Samson**, President, CIGI

7:15-8:15 a.m.

Panel 1: Geopolitics of Alternative Digital Payment Systems

Moderator: S. Yash Kalash, Senior Fellow, CIGI

Speakers:

- **Veda Vaidyanathan**, Fellow, Foreign Policy and Security Studies, Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)
- **Motolani Peltola (née Agbebi)**, Lecturer, University of Tampere, Finland
- **Sanjay Bhattacharyya**, Professor of Diplomatic Practice, OP Jindal Global University, India
- **Emily Jin**, Senior Associate, China Practice, The Asia Group

8:15-9:15 a.m.

Panel 2: Regulatory Cooperation and Experimentation with Tokenization

Moderator: Daniel Nagy, Senior Business Analyst, Giesecke+Devrinet

Speakers:

- **Heng Wang**, Professor of Law, Yong Pung How School of Law, Singapore Management University
- **Sharat Chandra**, Founder, EmpowerEdge Ventures
- **Ananya Kumar**, Deputy Director, Future of Money, GeoEconomics Center, Atlantic Council
- **Timothy Lane**, Senior Fellow, CIGI, and Former Deputy Governor, Bank of Canada

9:15-9:30 a.m.

Health Break

9:30-10:30 a.m.

Panel 3: Digital Payments and Financial Inclusion

Moderator: Arvind Gupta, Head, Digital India Foundation

Speakers:

- **Mansi Kedia**, Digital Specialist, World Bank

- **Chuanwei “David” Zou**, President, Jiangsu Jinke Research Institute on Digital and Technology Finance
- **Deepak Maheshwari**, Senior Policy Advisor, CSEP
- **Nancy Kiarie**, Senior Consultant, Inclusive Finance, Livelihoods and Agriculture, BFA Global

Thursday, September 25, 2025

7:00-7:15 a.m.

Opening Remarks and Keynote

- **Barry Eichengreen**, Professor, University of California, Berkeley

7:15-8:15 a.m.

**Fireside Chat — Lessons from the T20:
Digital Finance and Development in Africa**

Moderator: Paul Samson, President, CIGI

Speaker:

- **Fola Odufuwa**, Managing Director, New Frontier Capital Advisors

8:15-9:15 a.m.

Panel 4: Technological Innovations in Cross-Border Payments

Moderator: Tracey Black, Payments Expert

Speakers:

- **Mihir Gandhi**, Partner and Leader in Payments Transformation and Fintech, PwC India
- **Oshone Ikazoboh**, Chairman, Pactis, and Business Development Lead (Africa), Delta Network
- **Weili Zhu**, Partner, JunHe LLP
- **Douglas W. Arner**, Associate Director, Cambridge Centre for Alternative Finance

9:15-9:30 a.m.

Health Break

9:30-10:30 a.m.

Wrap-Up and Closing Remarks

- **S. Yash Kalash**, Senior Fellow, CIGI

Speaker Biographies



Douglas W. Arner

Associate Director, Cambridge
Centre for Alternative Finance

Douglas W. Arner specializes in the interlinkages between finance, technology, law and institutional systems, and broader sustainable development. He is associate director — research programmes of the Cambridge Centre for Alternative Finance at Cambridge Judge Business School, and the Kerry Holdings Professor in Law and RGC Senior Research Fellow in Digital Finance and Sustainable Development at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). At HKU, he is a senior fellow of the Asia Global Institute, associate director of the HKU-Standard Chartered Foundation FinTech Academy, a member of the Management Committee of the Techno-Entrepreneurship Core, and faculty director of the Law, Innovation, Technology and Entrepreneurship Programme. Douglas also holds the Sir Roy Goode Chair at the Centre for Commercial Law Studies at Queen Mary University of London. He is a non-executive director of NASDAQ-listed, early-stage biotechnology development firm Aptorum Group; a senior fellow of the Program on International Financial Systems and of the University of Melbourne School of Law; a PRIME Finance expert; an Advisory Board member of the European Banking Institute, SuperCharger Ventures, Policy 4.0, the Alliance for Innovative Regulation, the Digital Education Council and the Centre for Finance, Technology and Entrepreneurship; and co-founder of the Asia-Pacific Structured Finance Association. He leads the largest online fintech course on edX, now with more than 130,000 participants drawn from (almost) every country in the world. Douglas

has published 20 books and more than 200 articles, chapters and reports on finance, technology, regulation and development, including, most recently, *FinTech: Finance, Technology and Regulation* (Cambridge University Press, 2024; with Ross P. Buckley and Dirk A. Zetsche).



Sanjay Bhattacharyya

Professor of Diplomatic Practice,
OP Jindal Global University,
India

Sanjay Bhattacharyya is a former Indian diplomat who specialized in diplomacy for an era of globalization and transformation. As secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, he was at the helm of India's foreign policy-making diaspora affairs and citizen-centric governance initiatives, and was BRICS Sherpa during India's presidency. He served as ambassador to Switzerland, Turkey and Egypt.

Since his retirement from government in 2023, he has been an independent consultant, pursuing interests in academic, advocacy and corporate capacities. He is a professor of diplomatic practice at Jindal Global University and lectures regularly on governance, public policy and foreign affairs at government, academic and corporate institutions.

Sanjay serves as an independent director and as an adviser to companies in the corporate sector.



Tracey Black

Payments Expert

Tracey Black is a recognized leader across all facets of the payments ecosystem. Most recently, she served as president and CEO of Payments Canada, the organization responsible for operating and modernizing Canada's core payment systems. Previously, she held senior roles at TD and RBC, worked as an independent consultant and was a payments expert at McKinsey & Company.

She holds an M.Phil., an M.B.A. and the ICD.D designation. A strong advocate for Canada's digital future, Tracey remains committed to supporting the country's journey toward becoming a fully digital nation.



Sharat Chandra

Founder, EmpowerEdge Ventures

Sharat Chandra is the founder of EmpowerEdge Ventures, a Bengaluru, India-based firm dedicated to accelerating start-up growth. As a blockchain and emerging tech evangelist, he specializes in guiding deep tech and fintech early-stage ventures through their zero-to-one journey, facilitating market access and securing investment opportunities. Sharat is also a founding member of the India Blockchain Forum, India's prominent blockchain association. With more than a decade of experience, he has mentored start-ups through platforms such as the GIFT International Fintech Innovation Hub and the Government of Karnataka's FinTech Centre of Excellence.



Barry Eichengreen

Professor of Economics and Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley

Former CIGI Senior Fellow Barry Eichengreen is the George C. Pardee and Helen N. Pardee Professor of Economics and Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley, where he has taught since 1987. He is a research associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research and Research Fellow of the Centre for Economic Policy Research. Barry is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (class of 1997). He is a distinguished fellow of the American Economic Association (class of 2022), a corresponding fellow of the British Academy (class of 2022) and a Life Fellow of the Cliometric Society (class of 2013). He has held Guggenheim and Fulbright Fellowships and been a fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (Palo Alto) and the Institute for Advanced Study (Berlin). He is the recipient of a *doctor honoris causa* from the American University in Paris, and was the 2010 recipient of the Schumpeter Prize from the International Schumpeter Society and the 2022 recipient of the Nessim Habif Prize for Contributions to Science and Industry. His most recent book is *In Defense of Public Debt* with Asmaa El-Ganainy, Rui Esteves and Kris Mitchener (Oxford University Press, 2021).



Mihir Gandhi

Partner and Leader, Payments Transformation and Fintech, PwC India

Mihir Gandhi is a partner in the consulting practice of PwC India and leads the payments transformation and fintech consulting practice. With more than 21 years of consulting experience, he has developed a strong business and technology consulting exposure in India and international markets such as Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

Mihir is passionate about helping clients in the financial services, conglomerates and government entities to build and grow their payments businesses. He has been part of the digital payments growth story of India. He has managed the core team to set up India's domestic card scheme (RuPay) from 2011 to 2013. He has also been at the forefront of setting up country-level payments infrastructure for seven countries.

He works with fintechs and payments companies across the world to help them set up and grow, assist in regulatory compliance, improve operations and provide technology advice. He is also part of PwC's Global Payments Leadership Council, which regularly discusses matters of interest across the world.



Arvind Gupta

Head, Digital India Foundation

Arvind Gupta is the head and co-founder of Digital India Foundation, a policy think tank working in the areas of technology policy, digital inclusion, ethics of AI, supply-chain security, and governance of critical and emerging technologies. He is also an adjunct professor at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and Ashoka University. He has published many articles on the digital economy and governance in leading national newspapers in India, *Harvard Business Review* and for the World Economic Forum (WEF). He has been appointed as one of the board members of the Open Network for Digital Commerce, an interoperable network under public-private ownership, to empower neighbourhood stores to democratize the e-commerce landscape in India. In his previous role, he was the CEO of MyGov, a platform envisioned by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for digital inclusion through participative governance. He is also a member of the investment committee at the Small Industries Development Bank of India. He is a former board member of companies including Larsen & Toubro and the State Trading Corporation of India.

Arvind has almost three decades of industry experience in consumer internet, digital media, payment systems, analytics and the data economy, in senior leadership levels of policy and entrepreneurial profiles in India and Silicon Valley. He has been on the Global FinTech Top 100 list of influencers and is a member of the WEF's Global Future Council, and an expert member at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. He was awarded the Eisenhower Global Fellowship for Innovation in 2014 and the Distinguished Centenary Alumni Award from IIT. He is an active member of TiE and the National Association of Software and Service Companies, is a founding member of the

Indian Software Products Industry Round Table, and has co-founded start-ups such as Amplify.ai, ApnaPay and Ideaswall.



Oshone Ikazoboh

Chairman, Pactis, and Business Development Lead (Africa), Delta Network

Oshone Ikazoboh is a fintech executive with more than 15 years of experience building and scaling fintech ventures across Africa. He currently serves as chairman of Pactis (formerly BVNK Nigeria), a licensed payments infrastructure company, and leads business development for Africa at Delta Network, a pioneering identity and settlement platform for compliant cross-border payments. Oshone held senior roles at Access Bank, where he led the formation of Hydrogen Payment Services, its fintech arm; at BVNK, where he was managing director for its Nigeria business; and at Flutterwave as senior vice president for financial institutions and fintech. He also serves on several fintech advisory and corporate boards, including Kora Pay. His expertise spans digital payments, regulatory innovation, open banking, stablecoins and decentralized finance. His current focus is on embedding programmable payment layers across African banks and telecoms to enable seamless domestic and international commerce. He holds a postgraduate diploma in strategy and innovation from the University of Oxford's Saïd Business School.



Emily Jin

Senior Associate, China Practice, The Asia Group

Emily Jin is a senior associate with the China practice at The Asia Group, where she analyzes geopolitical trends to help clients navigate the complexities of US-China relations.

She previously served as a senior China analyst at an AI software start-up, leading research on US-China economic and technological competition and advising stakeholders across government, industry and think tanks. Before that, Emily was a research associate for the Energy, Economics and Security Program at the Center for a New American Security, where her research explored China's political-economic structure, US-China economic relations, and the intersection of economic and national security policy making. She contributed to policy discussions, testified before the US Congress on the national security implications of China's alternative financial systems, and developed a nuanced understanding of the interplay between technology, economic statecraft and national security.

Emily holds an M.A. in international economics and China studies from Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies and a B.A. in psychology from Georgetown University. She is natively fluent in Mandarin Chinese and enjoys reading, writing and running.



S. Yash Kalash

Senior Fellow, CIGI

S. Yash Kalash is a senior fellow at CIGI and an expert in strategy, public policy, digital technology and financial services. He has experience in emerging markets across India, MENA (Middle East and North Africa) and the Asia-Pacific and a distinguished track record advising governments and the private sector on emerging technologies. His expertise spans various industries, including fintech, AI and digital assets, and their impact on geopolitics. His career includes key roles at Roland Berger, the Government of India, Adani Group and KPMG, where he spearheaded strategic digital projects, advised clients on their digital assets and AI strategy, and informed policy and regulatory developments. With an M.Sc. in management from Imperial College London and a B.Sc. in international relations and politics from the University of Bath, Yash combines deep strategic insight with strong training, making him a versatile and impactful leader in the field of digital economy.



Mansi Kedia

Digital Specialist, World Bank

Mansi Kedia is a digital specialist with the World Bank's South Asia team, with more than 15 years of experience in policy research. Before joining the World Bank, she was leading the Digital Economy, Start-ups and Innovation team at the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, a well-established think tank in New Delhi, India. Her work on the digital

economy includes studying the impact of emerging technologies, data governance, digital public infrastructure, competition and regulation. She was a co-chair of the T20 Task Force on Our Common Digital Future: Affordable, Accessible and Inclusive Digital Public Infrastructure (2023), a mid-career fellow of the Internet Society (2022) and a member of the Direct Tax Committee (2017), which redrafted India's direct tax law. She also has a background in management consulting and financial services, with almost four years of experience in the private sector. She received her B.Sc. in economics from St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, and an M.B.A. from the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad. Her Ph.D. is from the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, New Delhi.



Nancy Kiarie

Senior Consultant, Inclusive Finance, Livelihoods and Agriculture, BFA Global

Nancy Kiarie is a seasoned expert in inclusive finance, sustainable livelihoods and gender equity, with more than 18 years of experience working across emerging markets. She brings expertise in advancing financial inclusion and economic empowerment for low-income and underserved populations through strategic program leadership, research, advisory and technical assistance.

Nancy has led high-impact initiatives in collaboration with financial service providers, policy makers, agricultural technology firms and development partners to design and deliver innovative financial solutions that drive meaningful change on the ground. Her cross-sectoral experience spans digital payments; microinsurance; micro-, small and medium-sized enterprise development; agricultural finance; and youth economic inclusion, with a focus on

marginalized segments, including women, youth and differently abled individuals.

She is known for her ability to lead high-performing teams and coordinate diverse stakeholder resources to achieve sustainable, inclusive development outcomes. Her work is rooted in a commitment to evidence-based design and systemic change, making her a key voice in shaping resilient and inclusive financial ecosystems.



Ananya Kumar

Deputy Director, Future of Money,
GeoEconomics Center,
Atlantic Council

Ananya Kumar is the deputy director, future of money, at the GeoEconomics Center, where she leads work on the future of money and does research on payments systems, CBDCs, stablecoins, cryptocurrencies and other digital assets. Her analysis has been cited by *The Economist*, the *Financial Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, the Federal Reserve, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Ananya previously worked in research assistant capacities at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Foreign Policy Institute at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). She has also worked as a legal analyst at Sidley Austin LLP in New York City. She holds an M.A. in strategic studies and international economics from SAIS, where she was a Merrill Center fellow. Ananya graduated cum laude from Bryn Mawr College with a B.A. in economics and political science.



Timothy Lane

Senior Fellow, CIGI, and Former
Deputy Governor, Bank of Canada

Timothy (Tim) Lane is a senior fellow at CIGI and a former deputy governor of the Bank of Canada (BoC) from 2009 through 2022. He shared responsibility for monetary policy and undertook a series of other responsibilities covering all main areas of central bank policy making. He led the BoC's work on CBDC and payments modernization, and chaired the Financial Stability Board's international working group on stablecoin regulation. Previously, he led the BoC's international work, serving as G7 and G20 Deputy.

Before joining the BoC, Tim served for 20 years at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), where he worked on a range of issues of advanced and emerging market economies. He has published research on monetary policy and on a variety of other topics related to economic and financial policy. He was also a visiting fellow at the University of Oxford. Prior to his work at the IMF, Tim served as assistant professor of economics at Michigan State University and at the University of Iowa. He received a B.A. from Carleton University in Ottawa and an M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Western Ontario in London.



Deepak Maheshwari

Senior Policy Advisor, Centre for Social and Economic Progress

Deepak Maheshwari has a keen interest in the interplay of public policy with technological innovation and socio-economic development. He has been closely engaged in the evolution of policies and regulations with respect to India's digital ecosystem for almost three decades. Currently, he is senior policy advisor at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress, advisor at the Indicus Centre for Financial Inclusion and a Public Affairs Advisory Board member of Palo Alto Networks. He has also been affiliated with the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, the Consumer Unity and Trust Society, the Center for the Digital Future and the Public Affairs Forum of India. An often-invited speaker, his views have been curated, published and cited widely.

Besides serving on government committees on AI and accessibility, he has volunteered as global chair of the IEEE Internet Initiative, secretary of the Internet Service Providers Association of India and advisory board member of the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad IDEA Telecom Centre of Excellence. Previously, he led the public policy function at Microsoft, Mastercard, Symantec and Sify, covering China, India, South Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations regions. A strong believer in public-private partnerships, he co-founded the National Internet Exchange of India and the International Telecommunication Union Asia-Pacific Telecommunity Foundation of India. An Indian Institute of Technology graduate in engineering, he also has a degree in law.



Daniel Nagy

Senior Business Analyst,
Giesecke+Devrient

At the crossroads of economics, finance and technology, Daniel Nagy helps reimagine the future of money. At Giesecke+Devrient, he serves as a lead consultant to central banks, financial service providers and public authorities on tokenized public and private digital currencies and assets. Through strategic dialogues and bold ideas, he regularly engages with these institutions on the economic, policy and technical dimensions shaping the future monetary system.

Daniel is a key member of the thought leadership team and has (co-)authored numerous papers and conceptual frameworks. He is a frequent speaker at international digital finance events and also drives the team's cross-border digital currency initiatives. He is responsible for addressing monetary policy, financial stability and regulatory domains of digital currencies with central banks. His primary research focus lies in exploring the impact of digital currencies on the global macroeconomy and geopolitics.

Previously, as director of institutional wealth and fund management, Daniel gained deep expertise in capital markets and global macroeconomics by managing a diverse client portfolio, including banks, insurance firms, pension funds and asset managers. He holds academic qualifications in finance and banking.



Fola Odufuwa

Managing Director, New Frontier
Capital Advisors

Fola Odufuwa is a strategic advisor on digital finance and infrastructure policy, bringing more than three decades of experience in regulatory cooperation, financial mobilization and cross-border payment innovation across emerging economies. His work spans digital payments, telecommunications and inclusive infrastructure, with a particular focus on Nigeria and broader African contexts.

He has developed frameworks for expanding digital access, conducted investment assessments for telecom operators and mobile money platforms, and supported financial mobilization efforts that have underpinned large-scale connectivity initiatives. His expertise includes evaluating capital formation strategies, advising on infrastructure growth and analyzing market dynamics.

Fola has also contributed to the development of digital identity systems, regulatory sandboxes, and tax modelling tools for information and communications technology (ICT) to improve affordability and governance. His work on fibre infrastructure and cross-border connectivity has informed national and regional priorities. He has led major surveys on digital adoption, offering insights into how individuals and microenterprises engage with technology.

His consulting engagements include work with the World Bank, the African Union, the Asian Development Bank, the UN Economic Commission for Africa, and private sector organizations such as Mozilla, Vodafone Fiji, IHS Telecoms and Liquid Intelligent Technologies. He holds an M.Sc. from the University of Ibadan and a B.Sc. (Hons.) in

physics from Lagos State University, and has authored more than 30 publications on ICT and digital finance in Africa.



Motolani Peltola (née Agbebi)

Lecturer, University of Tampere,
Finland

Motolani Peltola (née Agbebi) is a university lecturer in the Faculty of Management and Business, Tampere University, Finland. She holds a doctoral degree in administrative sciences from Tampere University. Previously, she studied at the Global Development Institute, University of Manchester, where she earned a master's degree in human resource management (international development). Her current research focuses on China's economic engagement in Africa. She explored the implications of this engagement for human capital development in Africa in her doctoral thesis. Her primary areas of research interest are in Sino-Africa relations and their implications for socio-economic development in Africa; China's Digital Silk Road and its implications for Africa's technological future; Chinese telecoms infrastructure provision in Africa and its environmental, social and governance impacts; and human capital development in Africa. Her research has been published in peer-reviewed academic journals, including *Third World Quarterly*, *Forum for Development Studies*, *Eurasian Geography and Economics* and *African and Asian Studies*.



Paul Samson

President, CIGI

Paul Samson is president of CIGI and has more than 30 years of experience across a range of global policy issues, working with international partners from around the world. He is currently focused on the transformation of the global economy through digitization, scenarios for an evolving world order and institutional global governance challenges.

During 24 years with the Government of Canada, Paul's positions included director general of strategic policy at the former Canadian International Development Agency and assistant deputy minister-level roles with Global Affairs Canada and with International Trade and Finance, Finance Canada. At the Privy Council Office, he held several positions during the tenure of three different prime ministers. Previously, he worked at Natural Resources Canada and Environment Canada. His last position was as associate deputy minister with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Paul served as director for Canada, Egypt and Ethiopia at the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (2018–2019). He served as Canada's deputy for finance at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum from 2015 to 2019 and frequently led Canadian delegations for meetings with multilateral development banks, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations and the Global Environment Facility. He was co-chair of the G20 Framework Working Group on the global economy from 2015 to 2019. During 2018–2019, Paul served as co-manager of the Canada-UK Policy Forum on the Modern Economy, which focused on the emerging digital economy. He also previously served on CIGI's Board of Directors.

Earlier in his career, he worked at several think tanks and universities in Geneva; Washington, DC; Oslo; and Boston. In Geneva, Paul worked with Mikhail Gorbachev at Green Cross International and in Washington he was a fellow within the US Department of Energy's National Laboratory network. In Oslo, Paul was a fellow with the Peace Research Institute; in Boston, he was a research fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Kennedy School of Government.

Paul completed a doctorate and an M.A. in international relations at the Graduate Institute, University of Geneva, and a B.A. at the University of British Columbia. He completed post-doctoral studies in global environment assessment at Harvard University.



Veda Vaidyanathan

Fellow, Foreign Policy and Security Studies, Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)

Veda Vaidyanathan is a fellow at CSEP, where she examines the evolving intersections of foreign policy, development cooperation and emerging strategic domains. Her current research explores how digital partnerships are becoming central to India's development diplomacy across Africa. She curates the Africa-India Global Dialogue Series, a joint initiative of CSEP and the African Union Development Agency, and is affiliated with the Institute of Chinese Studies and the Harvard University Asia Center. Veda was also a 2022–2023 Fung Global Fellow at Princeton University. Her research employs ethnographic methods and is evidence-based, offering cross-regional insights to inform policy.



Heng Wang

Professor of Law, Yong Pung How School of Law, Singapore Management University

Heng Wang is a professor at Yong Pung How School of Law, Singapore Management University. Previously, he was a professor at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, where he was a co-director of two major research centres. He has received major grants and awards, including being named Australia's research field leader in international law by *The Australian* newspaper.

His work is often cited in intergovernmental organization documents. He serves on the advisory group of a UN institution specializing in technology. He is also a member of the World Economic Forum's AI Governance Alliance, and the Future of Blockchain and Digital Assets initiative.

He has advised or been a (keynote) speaker at events organized by esteemed institutions, including the Asian Development Bank Institute, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, Deutsche Bundesbank, the Committee on Payments and Market Infrastructure of the Bank for International Settlements, the Hague Conference on Private International Law, the International Association of Privacy Professionals, the International Chamber of Commerce, the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes, the International Monetary Fund, the International Criminal Police Organization, the Monetary Authority of Singapore, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the private sector. Recently, he developed a digital tool kit, authored a blog series and conducted the staff learning session for the United Nations Development Programme.

His research evolves to explore the future of international economic governance, with particular attention to AI governance, digital currencies and navigating complex and uncertain environments. He is especially interested in how regulatory and governance systems can adapt to rapid technological change and evolving global dynamics.



Weili Zhu

Partner, JunHe LLP

Weili Zhu's corporate and mergers and acquisitions (M&A) practice focuses on legal and compliance solutions for business digitalization, investment and financing, corporate and M&A; compliance in domestic and cross-border third-party payment, integrated payment, internet e-commerce, cross-border e-commerce, bank card clearing, fintech, and other digital economy and internet or pan-financial areas; and advising Chinese-funded and foreign-funded payment institutions, internet e-commerce platforms and other online platforms, software-as-a-service providers, integrated payment companies, private equity funds and financial institutions on various projects in such areas.

Weili's banking and finance practice includes cross-border and domestic financing, representing Chinese-funded and foreign-funded financial institutions and borrowers on various types of bank financing projects, including bilateral and syndicated loans, acquisition financing, real estate development financing, working capital loans, seller financing, financing for privatization and delisting, refinancing and debt restructuring. In addition, he also has expertise in other types of compliance cases and special financing projects of financial institutions, such as art finance, optimization of the equity structure of

private banks, white-collar crimes in the banking industry, bank compliance investigations, cross-border recovery of misappropriated funds, review of structured finance products, cross-border art exhibitions and auctions, and security arrangements for financing. Prior to joining JunHe, Weili worked for years at various top-tier international law firms.



Chaunwei "David" Zou

President, Jiangsu Jinke Research Institute on Digital and Technology Finance

Chuanwei "David" Zou is the president of Jiangsu Jinke Research Institute on Digital and Technology Finance. Previously, he was chief economist and head of tokenization at HashKey Digital Asset Group (2019–2025), chief economist at Bitmain (2018–2019) and founding partner of Nanhu Finance Corporation (2015–2018). From 2006 to 2015, he held various senior positions at China Investment Corporation. David received a Ph.D. in economics from Tsinghua University, a mid-career M.P.A. from Harvard University, and an M.A. in economics and a B.S. in statistics from Peking University. He has been an associate research fellow of the People's Bank of China since 2014. In 2015, he won the Sun Yefang Financial Innovation Award (China's top prize for economists) and the China Soft Science Prize for his research on fintech. In 2013, 2014, 2017 and 2021, his books were named to the lists of "financial books of the year" by China Business Network. In 2019, David was nominated as one of the "top 10 institutional economists of the year" by China Business Network. In 2024, his book on digital assets won China's top award for financial books.