

## The G8 and the Heiligendamm Dialogue Process: Institutionalising the 'Outreach 5'

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Global Insight aims to provide members of the policy community with concise but trenchant analyses of topical issues. Comments and suggestions are invited.

THE GROUP OF 8 (G8), comprised of the world's leading economies,<sup>1</sup> faces growing criticism in terms of both its legitimacy and efficiency. Despite initiatives in the 1990s aimed at reform, the G8 has remained an 'elite club', failing to take account of changing global realities. An expanding international agenda coupled with the growing role of the emerging economies has given rise to a renewed emphasis on broadening the G8's membership. The difficulty is that while there may be an agreement in principle that the G8 needs reform, what that reform is and how it is realised is a source of considerable tension. Launched at the 2007 G8 summit in Germany, the Heiligendamm Dialogue Process (HDP) represents a move towards developing a more structured interaction between the G8 and the emerging economic and regional powers of the 'Outreach 5'.<sup>2</sup> While this two-year issue-oriented dialogue process is aimed at creating a platform from which to build cooperation in an effort to find joint solutions to global problems, the sustainability of the HDP faces a number of challenges.

This policy brief addresses the rationale for the HDP and its limitations ahead of the 2009 review in Italy. The brief takes as its starting point the development of the G8 and the attempts at reforming its structure. While initiatives seeking the fundamental transformation of the G8 have been resisted, there has been growing acknowledgement that the Group needs to engage with the emerging economic and regional powers in order to maintain a key role in shaping international decision-making. There are, however, a number of challenges to the institutionalisation of the HDP, including the question of membership and the level at which states participate. The second section of this policy brief highlights the tensions engendered by questions of inclusion and parity in shaping the future of this dialogue process. Although the HDP initiative implicitly highlights the importance of equality and partnership, an imbalance between the G8 and the 'partner' states prevails. Indeed, while the HDP offers the promise of inclusion, and the opportunity to promote regional positions, there has been little substantive change.

The final section of the policy brief raises questions regarding the sustainability of the HDP, particularly in light of the momentum gathering in the promotion of a 'South-South' dialogue. Certainly the impending two-year-review provides Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa the opportunity to carefully consider and review their own positions within the dialogue process, determining whether it is an appropriate forum for furthering their respective positions.

### Expanding the Dialogue: The G8 and the Heiligendamm Dialogue Process

The *raison d'être* for the Heiligendamm Dialogue Process is linked to the development of the G8. Starting out as ad hoc informal meetings between France, West Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States in 1973 (joined later that same year by Japan), these summits took on a more regular pattern following the 1975 gathering at Rambouillet, France. While Italy joined in 1975 and Canada in 1976, Russia's official participation only began in the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Full membership however, and the formal delineation of a G8, only came into effect in 2003.<sup>3</sup> Apart from the inclusion of Russia, no new state has been granted membership leaving the composition of the group not significantly altered from that of the 1970s. As a result the G8 is increasingly perceived as an anachronistic forum which does not reflect the changed realities of the global political economy.

For instance China and India, who represent a significant percentage of the world's population, contribute an increasing share of GDP and trade to the global economy. In addition, states from the developing world are challenging the dominance of the developed countries through international institutions such as the UN and the more recent IBSA grouping (India, Brazil, and South Africa). Their exclusion from the G8 thus raises both questions of legitimacy and efficiency. In the first instance, the membership of the G8 does not represent the developing world. Secondly, not only has the G8's agenda widened from its initial remit of macroeconomic management, finance and trade to include aspects such as climate change, energy security, disease, and development, but the ability of the group to address these international challenges has weakened.

Indeed, the G8 has faced a shortfall in its commitments on climate change and development in Africa, two issues that have repeatedly appeared on the summit agenda. In the case of climate change, while G8 member states pledged to reduce emissions by 50 per cent by 2050 at Hokkaido, no baseline year was mentioned, nor were the targets discussed legally binding. In respect of Africa's development, despite commitments from the G8 to increase aid by \$50bn a year, figures released by the OECD indicated an overall decline in aid in 2006.<sup>4</sup>

Questions regarding the G8's ability to respond to international crises without the inclusion and cooperation of the emerging economic and regional powers, prompted several initiatives aimed at expanding the dialogue. Certainly former

French Prime Minister, Edouard Balladur, contested the feasibility of a system that did not include the emerging economies in decision-making.<sup>5</sup> Limits on the G8's capacity to respond to the Asian financial crisis of 1997 saw the development of a Group of 20 (G20), established in 1999 and aimed at broadening the dialogue on economic and financial policy issues.

As first chair of the G20 former Canadian Prime Minister, Paul Martin, advocated for the development of a 'Leaders' 20' (L20), a group of twenty leaders from key states, which would replace the G8. Neither the G20 nor the L20 have been accepted by the G8 members as an alternative forum for discussion.

Certainly Japan continues to insist on maintaining the G8 as distinct from the G20 while Italy, which has a disproportionate share of political influence through its membership of the G8, has a particular stake in its continued existence. The idea of a L20 was subsequently shelved after Martin lost power in Canada while the G20, unlike the G8, has not as yet developed into a full summit process.<sup>6</sup>

Aimed at addressing questions of legitimacy, the process of 'outreach' began in 2003 at the Evian summit with former French President, Jacques Chirac, noting that for the G8 to make 'enlightened decisions' regarding global governance, it was necessary to include the voices of those 'that represent a growing proportion of international economic activity or population.'<sup>7</sup> The decision by Tony Blair to include Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa in the summit at Gleneagles (2005) was decisive in moving away from participation based on an invitational basis at the discretion of the host country. The aim was to establish the more permanent inclusion of an 'outreach' group that represented, what official documentation called, the 'emerging economy countries.'<sup>8</sup>

Although Russia was initially hesitant in including the 'outreach 5' (O5) at the St. Petersburg summit in 2006, the logic of their inclusion ultimately saw the Federation providing an 'outreach session' drawing in those states present at Gleneagles. During the 2007 G8 summit in Heiligendamm, the German hosts took a further step towards adopting a more structured engagement with the countries identified as key partner states. Giving recognition to the limitations of the G8's own capacity in addressing the growing challenges facing the international economy and the shifting economic parity, the Heiligendamm Dialogue Process establishes 'a dialogue between the member states of the G8 group of countries and the important emerging economies that deals with the biggest challenges the global economy is facing today.'<sup>9</sup>

Four areas have been singled out for an expanded dialogue:

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- promoting and protecting innovation;
- strengthening the freedom of investment by means of an open investment climate, including strengthening the principles of corporate social responsibility;
- determining joint responsibilities for development, focusing specifically on Africa;
- joint access to know-how to improve energy efficiency and technology co-operation, with the aim of contributing to reducing CO2 emissions.<sup>10</sup>

The HDP is set to run for a two year period with an initial review conducted in 2008 and a final progress review at the Italian summit in 2009. The HDP is not, however, without its challenges. While there has been progress in the processes of engagement, little has been achieved in terms of substance. As the section below indicates, the future of the HDP will rest on the responses of both the G8 and O5 to the unresolved issues of membership and participation on the basis of equality.

### Challenges confronting the Heiligendamm Dialogue Process

#### The membership question

In the first instance questions remain concerning the qualifications used in determining inclusion. While the Rambouillet Declaration of 1975 identified democracy and a commitment to free-market principles, free trade and the rule of law as part of the membership credentials, Russia's 'managed' democracy has raised questions about the Federation's inclusion. Moreover, following Russia's intervention in South Ossetia (August 2008), there have been increased calls from the US to exclude Moscow from the G8.<sup>11</sup>

Presidential candidate, Senator John McCain, has been particularly active in calling for Russia's exclusion while at the same time indicating his support for Brazil and India's inclusion, intentionally omitting any remarks on China's position.<sup>12</sup> Russia's G8 membership, however, has implications for China's future role in an expanded dialogue with the G8. While South Africa, India and Brazil may qualify on the basis of their democratic credentials, China's political authoritarianism and questionable human rights record present a challenge to its further integration. This is a position championed by the US, and on a more limited scale, by Japan.<sup>13</sup>

While the decision taken at Gleneagles (2005) to include Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa in the 'outreach' group laid the foundations for their subsequent inclusion at the G8 summits, no *official* explanations for the choice of

these particular states has been forthcoming. While the idea of the emerging economies provides motivation for Brazil, China and India, who currently fall within the top ten largest economies (based on Purchasing Power Parity), South Africa is ranked 25th. Although the country has a considerable economic standing in sub-Saharan Africa, the continent as a whole only accounts for approximately 2 per cent of the world's trade.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, as Thomas Fues points out, 'South Africa gets the nod because of its active global governance policy ... although there are major reservations on the continent of Africa concerning South Africa's claim to a leading role.'<sup>15</sup>

In other words, it is not just economic size but political considerations that play a part in determining which states should be included as part of the 'outreach' group. Indeed, Mexico's inclusion, according to Fues, is linked to US interests in 'provid[ing] its neighbour with a leading position in the global hierarchy.'<sup>16</sup>

Ranking	Country	Approximate GDP-Purchasing Power Parity
1	United States of America	\$13,811,200,000,000
2	China	\$7,055,079,000,000
3	Japan	\$4,283,529,000,000
4	India	\$3,092,126,000,000
5	Germany	\$2,727,514,000,000
6	Russian Federation	\$2,088,207,000,000
7	France	\$2,061,884,000,000
8	United Kingdom	\$2,046,780,000,000
9	Brazil	\$1,833,601,000,000
10	Italy	\$1,777,353,000,000

[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GDP\\_PPP.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GDP_PPP.pdf)  
accessed 13/10/2008

Compounding the question of inclusion is the difference in perceptions between current G8 members on the dialogue process. On the one hand France, Germany and the UK, have actively promoted extending the dialogue to include the major emerging countries.

Japan, on the other hand, favours the invitation process over the more structured dialogue of the HDP. For Tokyo, attendance by invitation provides a degree of flexibility, allowing the G8 to invite countries on an issue specific basis.<sup>17</sup> Japan provided a clear indication of the importance it attaches to flexibility by inviting a number of countries in addition to the O5 to the Hokkaido summit (2008), including Indonesia and South Korea.

A clear distinction is emerging between the idea of enlarg-



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ing the G8 and expanding the dialogue between the G8 and the 'outreach' states. While states like France, Germany and the UK may have indicated their support for expanding the dialogue, there has been significantly less enthusiasm for an enlarged G8. Certainly Germany has been quick to point out that the HDP is not a negotiating process or the forerunner to an enlarged G8.<sup>18</sup>

For their part some of the O5 states have raised concerns that inclusion in an enlarged G8 may undermine their leadership positions in the developing world. This is linked to fears that membership may be perceived as having been coopted by the developed (western) countries.

The O5 should not, however, be perceived as a homogenous group as differences in approach exist between these states on their participation in the dialogue process. For instance Brazil's Ricardo Berzoini, president of the Labour Party, has called for the G8's enlargement and Brazil's participation. South Africa, on the other hand has adopted a more cautious approach.

As Jacob Zuma notes, the interconnectedness of issues such as security and development policy 'necessitated that the G8 consider drawing in other major players as part of joint solution seeking. If anything, much work has yet to be done to match the global character of the issues with a more representative character in the deliberations.'<sup>19</sup> This is qualified by noting that the HDP should not eclipse the reform of the UN. China has also adopted a more cautious approach towards engagement with the G8 following from Russia's prolonged integration, which saw the Federation in the position of junior partner with 'probationer status,' before finally being included.

### The G8 – first among equals

The inclusion of the 'outreach 5' in the G8 has been largely political and symbolic rather than an effort in bringing about substantive changes in the system of global governance. From the outset the process has drawn criticism for the limited role of the O5 at Heiligendamm. Indeed, the communiqué launching the process was released before the O5 countries had joined their counterparts in the G8 at the summit.<sup>20</sup>

Although the Heiligendamm statement itself indicates that the meeting marked 'an important step towards an *equal and enduring partnership* for building the framework conditions of a globalized and competitive world economy',<sup>21</sup> critics have pointed to the 'patronizing, almost neo-colonial overtones' embodied by the concept of 'outreach.'<sup>22</sup>

The decision to use the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as a platform for this new dialogue engendered concern that the process would be dominated by the G8 as the OECD is comprised of predominantly developed states (although Mexico is a part of the Organisation and South Africa is well on its way to accession).

The decision to use the OECD in 'facilitating' the dialogue process appears to have been accepted by the O5 although consensual decision-making within the Organisation, which includes 23 non-G8 states, has the potential to influence decisions relating to the HDP through limiting resources available.

The joint statement released at Heiligendamm highlights the priorities of the G8 with little concession to the positions of the developing countries. For instance, in promoting research and investment the framework continues to highlight 'the importance of integrating the promotion and protection of innovation in our national policies and legislation.'<sup>23</sup> This is linked to the trade-related intellectual property rights (TRIPs) agreement, which is itself a source of continued antagonism between developed and developing countries. The TRIPs agreement maintains an inbuilt bias towards the protection of the ownership of knowledge, placing restrictions on the development of cheaper local alternatives in poorer countries.

Moreover, technology transfer has been slow and remains expensive, creating obstacles for developing countries in accessing the necessary technology to address challenges such as climate change, food security and health. In addition, trade has not been opened as an area of discussion in the HDP despite its inherent link with the delineated areas of discussion and its centrality to the interest of the developing countries, particularly agriculture agreements and non-agricultural market access (NAMA).

In the context of climate change, the HDP commitments continue to promote a market based approach as a panacea for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. The rhetoric on climate change emanating from the recent G8 summit in Japan conceals the tensions that exist between the O5 and the G8 in the context of the climate change and development debate. The importance given to carbon markets favours the industrialized G8, enabling them to offset their GHG emission through the cheapest means possible.

This has not resulted in significant reductions in carbon emissions. Indeed, the European Union's Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) has had only limited success while the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) has contributed to greater



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division within developing countries as they vie for carbon finance at the price of a focus on climate change.<sup>24</sup>

### The future of the Heiligendamm Dialogue Process

The prospect of a marginal position for the G8 in international relations has seen the rhetoric emanating from member states giving recognition the role of the emerging economies. The inclusion of 'partner states' in the HDP provides a means towards reaffirming the credibility of the Group through improving perceptions of legitimacy as well as enhancing coordination on global economic policy and an increasingly diverse array of global challenges. In contrast to the earlier reform initiatives such as the L20, the broad contours of the HDP are not antithetical to the G8 favouring its future development as a dialogue process. Nevertheless, while the processes may have altered, the HDP in its current form allows the G8 to contrive an image of legitimacy without significantly altering its composition or its approach.

Despite expressing their reservations regarding the imbalance in the framework for engagement, the O5 states have not been dissuaded from attending the G8 summit meetings. In the first instance, inclusion into the HDP has a symbolic appeal for the countries of the O5 as it represents an acknowledgement of their growing position in international affairs. Secondly, the HDP presents an opportunity for the O5 countries to be involved on the 'inside' of discussions that 'play an overarching role in relation to other, more formal, institutions of 'global governance.'<sup>25</sup>

In other words, inclusion provides an opportunity for the O5 to advocate for the reform of global structures of governance from within the process. This has a particular appeal for a state like South Africa with a foreign policy focus on the reform of the global system of governance, described by South Africa's former President, Thabo Mbeki, as a new 'global apartheid'. Participation in the HDP thus presents a platform from which to pursue the country's foreign policy focus on the African agenda and reform of the global system of governance.

For both the G8 and the O5 countries the HDP presents an opportunity for furthering international dialogue and cooperation in confronting global challenges that transcend national boundaries (climate change, disease, energy security). The nature of the summit process provides the opportunity for confidence and network building between leaders, promoting a greater understanding of regional priorities. In other words, the dialogue process can serve as a bridge between

agenda priorities of the developed and developing countries. There are, however, qualifications to the advantages of the personal interaction of leaders at the summit. In the case of the HDP, over the course of the 2 year review period a number of changes have, or will, take place in the political leadership. Already there have been changes in the political leadership of the UK, Russia, South Africa and the US.

With the HDP subject to a final review at the Italian summit in 2009, the two-year time frame is an indication of the immediacy given to assessing the process of dialogue. Nevertheless, building effective networks and discussion forums requires time for development, which such a limited time-frame may inhibit. As such the final review may not adequately capture the benefits of the HDP.

On the other hand this limited time frame is perhaps of benefit to the O5 states, allowing them the scope to identify and challenge the inherent flaws within the process before committing to deeper engagement. The two-year time frame has other implications for the HDP. Following the summit at Heiligendamm, Japan hosted the 2008 summit where the interim review was conducted, while the final review is to be concluded at the G8 summit in Italy. As indicated above, neither Japan nor Italy have been overly supportive of the process of expanding the G8.

Certainly the *Interim Report* on the progress of the HDP, presented at the G8 summit in Hokkaido, made it clear that the HDP is not a negotiating process, but rather a topic-driven policy dialogue informed by openness, transparency, and equal partnership to compliment the work in other regional and multilateral forums.<sup>26</sup> Support from both the US and Japan in maintaining the current status quo, only serves to aggravate questions of inclusion.

The fall-out from the US sub-prime crisis and its continuing ripple effect on the global political economy highlights the need for greater cooperation and management internationally. While the HDP represents a move towards integrating emerging economic and regional powers into an existing framework, questions of the G8's legitimacy and efficiency may ultimately see states moving towards alternative international forums.

As John Kirton of the G8 Research Group indicates, the challenge facing informal summit institutions such as the G8, is that their livelihood depends on their performance.<sup>27</sup> Certainly, Brazil, India and South Africa have been at the front of initiatives to promote 'South-South' cooperation between developing countries. The IBSA trilateral development initiative is a significant move towards such cooperation. While there has been some scepticism regarding the ability of devel-

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oping states to form a coherent bloc in opposition to G8, IBSA is a signal to the countries of the G8 that theirs is not the only game in town.

### Conclusion

Leaders within the G8 have increasingly given recognition to the importance of drawing in emerging economies and regional powers in addressing global challenges. The Heiligendamm Dialogue Process has been an incremental response to the changing international dynamics confronting the G8. Rather than enlarging the G8 to include the identified 'partner' states (a G13), the HDP has focused on extending a dialogue process to Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa. While there are a number of opportunities to build on the relationship between the G8 and the O5, questions of membership and equality present a challenge to the future continuance of the process.

The current guardians of the international economic order still hold the dominant positions in international economic institutions. Indeed, while attention has been focused on the reform of the G8, it is the G7 of finance ministers (which excludes Russia) that continues to wield significant influence in the global political economy.<sup>28</sup>

In its current form therefore, the HDP is merely a means of tipping a hat towards legitimacy through engagement with the so-called emerging countries while retaining the exclusivity of the G8 membership. In other words, while there has been a move towards an expanded dialogue there has been no serious discussion of G8 enlargement. Despite the rhetoric given to equality and partnership *realpolitik* continues to prevail.

### Recommendations

*A need for direction:* The impending progress review of the HDP will need to set out a clear pathway towards a more participatory system in the G8. This will be essential in generating support for, and continued engagement by, the developing countries.

*Resolving the enlargement or expanded dialogue debate:* The future of the HDP rests on the ability of the G8 member states to coordinate and agree on questions of enlargement or expansion. To this effect the G8 need to prioritise discussion and agreement on the future of the organisation through enlargement or expanded dialogue. In the case of a decision to pursue an expanded dialogue, agreement needs to be

reached on the format of engagement with clearly defined guidelines for participation.

*Questioning the value of the process:* The O5 states need to give careful consideration to the value of joining the expanded dialogue in the context of what they want to achieve and the potential of achieving it within this forum. In other words rather than succumbing to coalition spread, there needs to be an assessment of whether the G8 is the most appropriate international forum for attaining their particular interests and priorities.

### Endnotes

- 1 The G8 includes – Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
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- 22 Payne, op. cit., p. 532.
- 23 Joint Statement by the German G8 Presidency and the Heads of State and/or Government of Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa on the occasion of the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, op. cit.
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