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# WORKING PAPER

International Institutional Reform

## Summitry from G5 to L20: A Review of Reform Initiatives

PETER I. HAJNAL

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Working Paper No.20

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## Author Biography

Peter I. Hajnal is Research Fellow, Munk Centre for International Studies, and retired Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto. A member of the G7/G8 Research Group of the University since 1988, he attended twelve summits. Prof. Hajnal was consultant in evaluating the Dag Hammarskjöld Library of the UN; establishing the library of the Southeast European University at Tetovo, Macedonia (supported by the OSCE and the EU); assessor of the 2005 G8 Stakeholder Consultation for Chatham House; and advisor to the Forum internationale de Montréal on relations with the G8, and to the Civil G8 project in 2006 in Russia.

In addition to a number of articles, book chapters and conference contributions, he is author or editor of nine books, most recently *Civil Society in the Information Age* (Ashgate, 2002); *Sustainability, Civil Society and International Governance: Local, North American and Global Perspectives* (Ashgate, 2006; co-edited with John Kirton); and *The G8 System and the G20: Evolution, Role and Documentation* (Ashgate, forthcoming 2007).

## **Abstract**

Pressures to reform the Group of Eight (G8) have come from a variety of sources and perspectives, including academic analysts, practitioners, civil society, leaders of non-G8 countries, and even some of the G8 leaders themselves. Over its 32-year history, this elite forum of democratic industrialized countries has shown its ability to accommodate change, but it is rooted in an earlier era, and the growing power shift in global relations toward emerging market countries has not been reflected in either its scope or its membership. In recent years there has been a plethora of proposals to reform the club, from narrowing its brief to having it to coexist with a new and more representative body, and from membership expansion to complete abolition. To appreciate the full extent of this set of debates, this paper looks back at the origins of the summit and its intended architecture. It then reviews and analyses actual and proposed reforms over the summit's history, from early pressures to modify the original G5 through current attempts to move beyond the G8 to an Leaders' 20 (L20) or perhaps a group of 14.

## 1. Introduction

Growing dissatisfaction over structural, representative, operational, agenda-setting and other aspects of the Group of Eight (G8) has become widespread among the academic and policy communities. Pressures to reform the exclusive club have thus come from many sources. The G7/G8 itself has shown some capacity to carry out certain reforms internally, but numerous other reform initiatives - from academia, non-member states, civil society and even some current or past G8 leaders - are still to bear fruit. These initiatives have ranged from membership increases to restructuring, rationalizing the G7/G8 agenda and processes, and, more radically, abolishing the G8 entirely or replacing it by a new (more restricted or expanded) forum.

Despite its proven flexibility and significant achievements over its 32-year history, the G8 remains rooted in an earlier era, and has not adequately responded to changing political and economic realities over its lifespan. Most pressing has been the emergence of crucial new actors outside the G8 framework and their significance to global governance. Without the full participation of China, India, Brazil and others, satisfactory answers to global problems cannot be devised. Additionally, the G8 has not been able to cope fully and effectively with many new global issues, for example development needs and trade regimes.

To appreciate the full extent of this set of debates, this paper looks back at the origins of the summit and its intended architecture. It then reviews and analyses actual and proposed reforms over the summit's history, from the early pressures to modify the original G5 through to current attempts to move beyond the G8 to expanded arrangements such as a Leaders' 20 (L20).



## 2. Pressure for Membership Changes in the Early Years of Summitry

The origins of the G8 can be traced back to several economic shocks in the 1970s, particularly the collapse of the Bretton Woods monetary system of fixed exchange rates and the inability of the Bretton Woods institutions to implement the necessary reforms to overcome these problems; the first oil crisis, with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) embargo on oil supplies in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur war, and the Western countries' challenge to respond to the crisis and its economic effects; and, the 1974 economic recession in countries of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), with inflation and unemployment rising sharply. Recognizing that in this international context "the traditional organs of international co-operation were no longer able to reconcile the differences among the leading Western powers or to give them a sense of common purpose,"<sup>1</sup> the finance ministers of France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States met in March 1973 in the White House library, forming the "Library Group." The four were later joined by Japan, and this G5 (Group of Five finance ministers) met periodically, in secrecy, over the following years.

When two core members of the G5, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Helmut Schmidt later became, respectively, President of France and Chancellor of Germany, they wished to build on the group's informality, congeniality and confidential negotiating process to tackle mutual economic problems. Thus, the first leaders' level summit was called to be held in Rambouillet, France, in November 1975.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert D. Putnam and Nicholas Bayne, *Hanging Together: Cooperation and Conflict in the Seven-Power Summits*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 25-7.

But pressures for broadening the club's membership arose from the very beginning, leading to the admission first of Italy, then Canada, then inviting the participation of the European Union, and finally adding Russia, transforming the G5 into G6, G7 and G8. The leaders have valued the benefits of the summit format for policy coordination, interaction with other national executive branches and international organizations, and the flexibility to tackle emerging issues on their agenda.<sup>2</sup>

### **Italy, Canada and the European Community**

France, Germany, the UK, the US and Japan, the five countries whose finance ministers had been meeting (initially without Japan), periodically since 1973 were the founding architects of the G7 leaders' forum. Agitation for membership changes was evident from the very inception of the summits; Italy was somewhat reluctantly admitted into the club in time for the inaugural G6 summit at the Château de Rambouillet in France in 1975.

Canada, desiring to join the club from the beginning, was supported by several of the G5 leaders but its participation was firmly opposed by France. It was only at the second summit, in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1976 that the host leader, US President Gerald Ford, issued the formal invitation. Canada has been a valued member ever since. The European Community (now European Union) was invited to participate for the first time at the third summit, in London in 1977. Thus, while still very restricted in membership, the summits had nonetheless become somewhat more representative than the original G5.

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<sup>2</sup> Over the decades, the agenda expanded from the initial focus on macroeconomic co-ordination to embrace a whole gamut of broader political and transnational issues such as the environment, international terrorism, drugs, infectious diseases.

## Russia

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union was a problem for and an antagonist of the G7, and certainly not a candidate for membership in the club. But this began to change when, on 14 July 1989, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev sent a letter to French President François Mitterrand, that year's summit host, expressing the Soviet Union's wish to be associated with the summits. That was only accomplished, for post-Soviet Russia, after a multi-year, incremental process.

Two years later, in 1991, Gorbachev visited London as the G7 summit was ending. He did not attend the summit but met with G7 leaders individually and collectively, and discussed in detail the plans for Soviet economic and political reform. Attitudes among the G7 varied about how and to what extent to help the Soviet Union, but the leaders "all agreed to work together to promote the integration of the Soviet Union into the world economy."<sup>3</sup> The next year, President Yeltsin of post-Soviet Russia was at the Munich summit site where, although formally outside the summit framework, he held bilateral meetings as well as joint sessions with the G7 leaders, and returned home not only with a greater show of goodwill but also a more concrete aid package (US\$4.5 billion) than had his predecessor. The Russian leader was similarly invited to meet with the G7 heads after the official ending of the 1993 summit. Then, in Naples in 1994, Russia participated for the first time as a full partner in the political discussions of the summit itself. This "P8" or "Political 8" format continued in Halifax in 1995 and Lyon in 1996.

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<sup>3</sup> John Major and Mikhail Gorbachev, "Joint Press Conference Given by the Prime Minister, Mr John Major and the Soviet President, Mr Mikhail Gorbachev," London, UK, 17 July 1991.

At the Denver summit in 1997 Russia joined the G7 (except for certain financial and other economic issues), to form what host leader Bill Clinton termed the "Summit of the Eight". Russia's emerging democracy and growing market economy are often cited as the qualification of its admission into the club, but geopolitical considerations, in fact, have played a major part. In his memoir, Clinton gives this account of his conversation with Yeltsin in Helsinki in the spring of 1997, just a few months before the Denver summit: "I told Yeltsin that if he would agree to NATO expansion and the NATO-Russia partnership, I would make a commitment not to station troops or missiles in the new member countries prematurely, and to support Russian membership in the new G-8, the World Trade Organization, and other international organizations. We had a deal." At the Denver summit, "we voted to take Russia in as a full member of the new G-8, but to allow the finance ministers of the other seven nations to continue to meet on appropriate matters. Now Yeltsin and I had both kept our Helsinki commitments."<sup>4</sup>

It was in Birmingham in 1998 that the G7 became officially the G8, with Russia as a full member, although the G7 continued for several more years (up to and including the 2002 Kananaskis summit) to coexist with the G8, both at the summit and ministerial levels, and the G7 finance ministers' forum survives till this day. (In Birmingham, G7 leaders met, without Russia, for two hours before the official start of the G8 summit.) In 2006 in St. Petersburg, for the first time in summit history, Russia hosted an annual summit, turning the hosting rotation cycle from seven to eight years.

Russia's full membership has changed summity. The G8 is clearly more representative than the G7, and reflects greater diversity.

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<sup>4</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Vintage, 2005), 750, 758.

### 3. Proposals and Initiatives Prior to 1998

For many years, the G7/G8 leaders had expressed their wish to stage smaller, more intimate and more focused summit meetings, with fewer officials in attendance and fewer media correspondents around. Former British Prime Minister John Major stated his conviction, perhaps more emphatically than his G7 peers, "that the summits have lost their original personal character, becoming institutional (or at least bureaucratic) and [he has invoked] a return to their origins. His proposal seems to have met with consensus from his colleagues ...."<sup>5</sup> A summary of his letter of August 1992, detailing his concerns to other G7 heads of state or government, appeared in the *Financial Times* of London.<sup>6</sup> The fact that his proposals found resonance with the other heads is shown by the 1993 Tokyo communiqué, and the more informal, leader-oriented summits of Naples, Halifax, Lyon, and especially Birmingham and subsequent summits.

Others have proposed various courses of action for the G7, ranging from abolition to institutional strengthening. In the mid-1990s, American diplomat and scholar W. R. Smyser suggested that although the G7 had become "for a time one of the most influential institutions of the twentieth century ..., it ... [later] evolved in ways that could not be foreseen and that no longer serve its original purpose." Because he argued that the "G-7 mechanism ... [was then] receiving a failing score ... [and was] not functioning as originally conceived ..., [he asked whether] the G-7 structure, including the ministerials and especially the summits, should

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<sup>5</sup> Cesare Merlini, "The G-7 and the Need for Reform," *The International Spectator*, vol. 29, no. 2 (April/June 1994, Special Issue): 6; Michael R. Hodges, "More Efficiency, Less Dignity: British Perspectives on the Future Role and Working of the G-7," *The International Spectator*, vol. 29, no. 2 (April/June 1994, Special Issue): 146.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Stephens, "Major Calls for Overhaul of G7 Summits," *Financial Times* (London), 10 September 1992, 1.

be discontinued." Nevertheless, he then acknowledged the continuing reasons for some type of summit: the usefulness of informal talks among leaders, the need to discuss post-Cold War problems on the highest level, and the need for agreement of the most important states in order to build "a successful world order"; and went on to suggest a different format and agenda, and a cabinet-level working committee to replace the sherpas.<sup>7</sup>

In response to this call, William E. Whyman asserted that the summit had a future but had to be strengthened. He presented two "trajectories" of summit evolution: first, a revitalized G7 process that would refocus the agenda on core macroeconomic issues, keep membership small but develop associations with other countries or groups of countries and make the summit process simple and flexible, with closer ties with finance ministers; and second, an incremental process that would expand the summit agenda to include more political and global issues, result in larger membership as well as association relationships, and increase the complexity of the process, with "creeping institutionalism." Staking out a middle ground between summit optimists and pessimists, Whyman concluded that the "incremental" scenario was the more realistic one.<sup>8</sup>

Writing about the summit in the early 1990s, *New York Times* correspondent Flora Lewis put forth a rather optimistic perspective on the state of the institution in the immediate wake of the end of the Cold War, but suggested that a greater role for Russia was becoming necessary even at that early stage.<sup>9</sup> Japanese professor

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<sup>7</sup> W. R. Smyser, "Goodbye, G-7," *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 16, 23, 26.

<sup>8</sup> William E. Whyman, "We Can't Go On Meeting Like This: Revitalizing the G-7 Process," *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 149-63.

<sup>9</sup> Flora Lewis, "The 'G-7½' Directorate," *Foreign Policy*, no. 85 (Winter 1991-92): 25-40.

(and later Ambassador) Kuniko Inoguchi was very supportive of the summits in the post-Cold War era, stating that "periodic meetings of the leaders of major nations to discuss international problems are becoming the most realistic means of overseeing the world order and building consensus on new directions. In a sense, this format can be seen as laying the groundwork for joint management of the post-hegemonic international politics of the twenty-first century."<sup>10</sup>

Italian scholar Andrea de Guttery envisioned a greater degree of bureaucratic institutionalization; she suggested a secretariat for the G7 (either by creating one within the G7 or by using the OECD for this purpose). G. John Ikenberry went even further, calling for a G7 secretariat and a G7 council of ministers, composed of foreign and treasury ministers, with varying membership according to topic. Hanns W. Maull, by contrast, stated a German perspective: "the answer to the idea of a G7 secretariat is an unequivocal 'no'" and that Germany would rather see other international organizations - the OECD, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) - assume follow-up and monitoring of summit undertakings. Writing about ideas of radical summit reform, Robert D. Putnam pointed out that "neither Smyser's recommendation to 'abolish it' nor Ikenberry's advice to 'institutionalize it' ha[d] significant official support."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Kuniko Inoguchi, "The Changing Significance of the G-7 Summits," *Japan Review of International Affairs*, vol. 8, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 23.

<sup>11</sup> Andrea de Guttery, "The Institutional Configuration of the G-7 in the New International Scenario," *The International Spectator*, vol. 29, no. 2 (April/June 1994, Special Issue): 76; G. John Ikenberry, "Salvaging the G-7," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 136-8.; Hanns W. Maull, "Germany at the Summit," *The International Spectator*, vol. 29, no. 2 (April/June 1994, Special Issue): 135; Robert D. Putnam, "Western Summitry in the 1990s: American Perspectives," *The International Spectator*, vol. 29, no. 2 (April/June 1994, Special Issue): 86.

Writing on the eve of the 1996 Lyon Summit, former US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski noted: "the very concept of the Group of Seven not only has become compromised but distorts global realities." He added: "the group's membership is no longer representative of power or of principle, and it needs to be expanded. Russia ... cannot now be excluded. ... China, India and Brazil are as entitled to participation as Russia, and in some respects much more so." Acknowledging the need to limit membership, he thus advocated a G11.<sup>12</sup> Yet in 2004, commenting on Russia's admission into membership which turned the G7 into the G8, Brzezinski recalled the rationale for the original G7 which "was meant to provide an opportunity for the heads of the leading and economically most powerful democracies to consult one another." He added: "The inclusion of Russia ... was motivated by the political desire to give the troubled post-Soviet Russia - though it is neither a genuine democracy nor a leading economy - a sense of status and belonging." However, given that Russia was now a member, he called for adding China and India, thus turning the G8 into an economic and political G10.<sup>13</sup>

#### **4. The 1998 Birmingham Reforms**

The 1998 Birmingham summit took major steps in summit reform, producing several innovations in participation, format and agenda. Birmingham officially integrated Russia into the club, turning it into the G8. It was a leaders-only summit, with foreign and finance ministers meeting separately in London a week before the Summit, on 8-9 May, to prepare for the summit and to deal with issues not on the agenda of the summits. This

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<sup>12</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Let's Add to the G-7," *The New York Times*, 25 June 1996, A11.

<sup>13</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 123.



format made it possible to achieve greater informality than was the case at previous summit history, enabling the leaders to spend considerable time together and to focus personally on topics that they wished to discuss. And it had a more focused agenda than previous summits. The more limited agenda also reduced the volume of documentation, although this effect proved to be rather inconsistent after Birmingham.<sup>14</sup>

Although the Birmingham innovation of leaders-only summits has since become established practice, there continued to be much dissatisfaction with the G7/G8. Shortly after the Birmingham summit, noted Columbia University economist Jeffrey Sachs proposed transforming the G8 into a G16, comprising the present G8 plus eight developing countries. For this expanded club, Sachs placed democratic governance as the major criterion of membership, and argued that the core developing country candidates should be Brazil, India, South Korea and South Africa, joined "soon [by] a democratic Nigeria." In his view, a "development agenda" should guide this new body, including: global financial markets and international financial reform; conditionality and foreign aid; reform of the international assistance programme; and ending the debt crisis.<sup>15</sup> Once Birmingham opened the door to summit reform, post-summit assessments and proposals have proliferated.

In a post-Genoa leader in July 2001, the *Financial Times* questioned whether "G8 summits should exist and, if so, in what form", and noted: "summits have worked best when the leaders have had a chance to be separate from their national entourages ... and when there has been a crisis to try to sort out". The piece concluded that there "should have been ... a commitment to hold

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<sup>14</sup> Nicholas Bayne, *Staying Together: The G8 Summit Confronts the 21st Century* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 6, 8-10, 37.

<sup>15</sup> Jeffrey Sachs, "Global Capitalism: Making It Work," *The Economist*, vol. 348, no. 8085 (12 September 1998): 23-5.

the next G8 only when there is a burning topic to discuss."<sup>16</sup> The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, mere months later, thrust just such a topic onto the international consciousness, placing security at the top of the agenda.

In the post-9/11 context, security for the leaders became paramount for summit host countries. Therefore, G8 summits since Kananaskis in 2002 have met at remote places (although there are early precedents of summits held far from urban centres: the very first summit in the Château de Rambouillet outside Paris in 1975 and the first Canadian-hosted summit at Montebello, well away from Ottawa, in 1981). This has had the advantage of easier security for the G8 leaders but also the disadvantage of the leaders meeting far from the media, the public, and civil society. At Gleneagles in 2005, however, accredited media personnel were again located near, but still isolated from, the venue of the leaders' meetings. Furthermore, the remote locale did not prevent protesters, or rock stars (notably the Live8 phenomenon) and the Make Poverty History march, from making their presence felt.

The influential Shadow G-8 (formerly called G-8 Preparatory Conference) of distinguished individuals with high-level previous summit experience was launched in 2000 on the premise that "recent G-8 summits have not fulfilled their potential. [Its members] believe that summits should reform their methodology and adopt agendas that effectively address the sweeping changes in global economic and security affairs that characterize the early years of the new century."<sup>17</sup> Given that G8 leaders have had a hard time reforming themselves (although the Birmingham reforms were

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<sup>16</sup> "For Slimmer and Sporadic Summits," *Financial Times*, 23 July 2001, 10.

<sup>17</sup> C. Fred Bergsten and Thierry de Montbrial, "Letter of Transmittal to the Leaders of the G-8 Member Countries," in Shadow G-8, *Restoring G-8 Leadership of the World Economy* (Washington, DC: Institute of International Economics, May 2003).

worthwhile), the question can be asked: why not start a new group in which the heads of systemically important countries could meet and get to know one another?<sup>18</sup>

## 5. The L20 Initiative

One of the most interesting reform ideas to encompass such important countries is the proposal to turn the G20 finance ministers' forum into a leaders' level group of 20, or L20. The idea was taken up with enthusiasm by former Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin who, in his previous post as finance minister, had been the first chairman of the financial G20. Writing in a 2005 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, he succinctly made the case for an expanded leaders' level summit, and introduced the 'L20' terminology to the wider policy community. He reviewed and analyzed the circumstances of the emergence and functioning of the finance ministers' G20; discussed the need for a similar forum for political leaders; and, outlined the L20's possible composition, initial agenda and potential ambit, role, and relations with existing multilateral organizations.<sup>19</sup> Choosing this influential American journal to showcase the idea was strategic - reflecting Martin's recognition that summit reform is not possible without the support of the United States.

With this framework as their guide and motivated by the need to resolve issues that have proven intractable in institutions of global governance - including summits - The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and the Centre for Global Studies (CFGs) at the University of Victoria, have been examining the ramifications of this potential transformation of the G20 into

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<sup>18</sup> Author's interview with a member of the Shadow G-8, 1 December 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Martin, "A Global Answer to Global Problems: The Case for a New Leaders' Forum," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 3 (May/June 2005): 2-6.

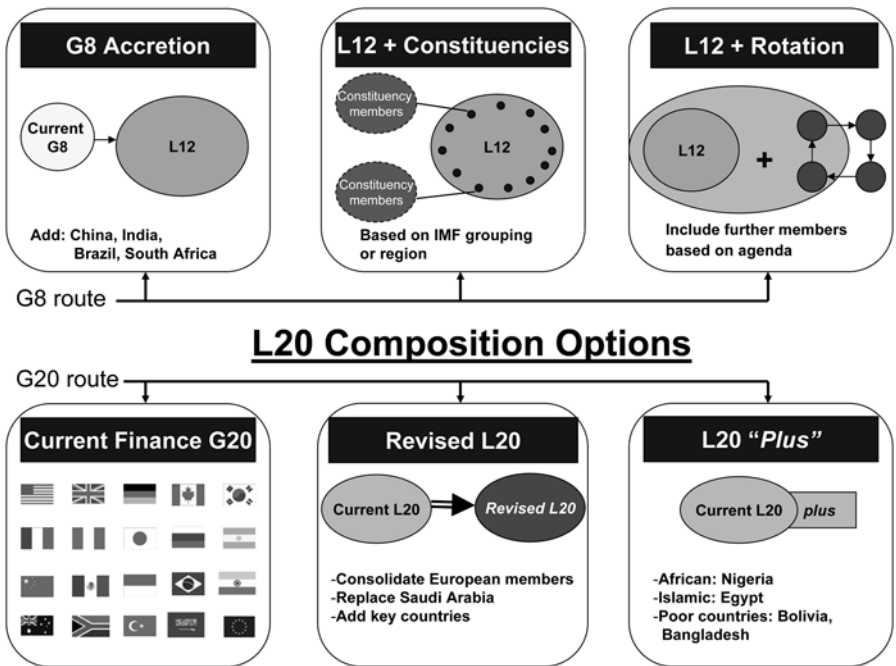
the L20. Their multi-year, international study has sought to answer a number of questions: What are the issues? What may be the appropriate design for a successful L20 acceptable to the leaders? And what is the best route to attaining consensus to establish the L20 summit process? Such a new L20, if successful, would be more broadly representative than the G8, bringing to the table systemically important developing countries (notably China, India and Brazil) and countries with emerging economies. It would set and focus on priorities at the highest level, transcending national bureaucracies, and would be an institution enjoying legitimacy in promoting fiscal, social and environmentally responsible policies; it would also address the efficiency gap, and would be a catalyst for and guide to broader reforms of global governance. The 2005 book analyzing these issues, *Reforming from the Top: A Leaders' 20 Summit*, considers the wider positive and negative context of the L20 proposal, and examines the degree of receptivity for an L20 by the South. It discusses the modalities of achieving the L20: having an L20 replace the G7/G8 through a "giant leap"; incrementally increasing the membership of the G8 through a G9 and G10 to an eventual L20; and creating an L20 that would operate alongside a continuing G8.<sup>20</sup> (Figure 1 illustrates a range of composition options.) This work stands as the most comprehensive study of the proposal and its contents deserve further examination.

### **Possible Formations/Arrangements**

Global policy challenges facing leaders have changed significantly since the end of the Cold War. Prominent Shadow G-8 member Wendy Dobson noted in a paper predating the L20 initiative that in the days when the G7 was first established, world politics operated very differently, with a select cast of

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<sup>20</sup> John English, Ramesh Thakur, and Andrew F. Cooper, eds. *Reforming from the Top: A Leaders' 20 Summit* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2005).



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Source: Centre for Global Studies, University of Victoria, <<http://www.globalcentres.org>>; <<http://www.L20.org>>. Figure created by Gordon Smith, Barry Carin and Clint Abbott.

characters. In a similar thrust to the future proposal, she asserted that a "G-3 or G-7 'directorship' [was] no longer acceptable. ... [What was required was] consensus among a wider group." She envisioned two scenarios to build on the precedent of the G20 finance ministers' forum: convening functional groups of ministers from G20 countries on systemic problems such as climate change, North-South issues, trade and poverty alleviation; and expanding leaders' meetings to include all the leaders of the G20 countries. In the interest of efficient management, this leaders' body would require a steering committee with revolving

membership. In Dobson's view, this new body would not replace the G8 but would meet periodically before or after G8 summits.<sup>21</sup> As the idea of this sort of expansion was taking shape within the academic community, it became clear that if summit reform was to gain real traction, consultation on possible arrangements with experts around the globe was needed to fully develop the concept.

Among the contributors to the CIGI/CFGS L20 project, Director of the University of Toronto's G8 Research Group John Kirton traces and assesses the origins, mandate, membership, evolution and performance of the finance ministers' G20 and its relation to the G7/G8, and formulates the three options for the L20 as that of the "rejectionists" who consider that an L20 would stretch the financial G20 beyond its competence; the "reinforcers" who would add an ad hoc or permanent L20 to existing institutions of global governance; and the "replacers" who advocate an L20 that would supplant the G8. He favours an L20 that would function in parallel with the G8 rather than replace it.<sup>22</sup> Angel Gurría, a former Mexican finance and foreign minister and current Secretary-General of the OECD, sees an L20 operating in a similar fashion. He underlines the need for such a summit "[b]ecause the different fora that [now] deal with globalization are not working." This L20 would function alongside the G8 and its agenda would concentrate on contentious or stalled issues whose successful solution requires the leaders' participation. It would have a small secretariat, with members designated by the heads of the UN, the OECD, the IMF, the World Bank and the regional

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<sup>21</sup> Wendy Dobson, "Broadening Participation in G-7 Summits," in G-8 Preparatory Conference, *Toward Shared Responsibility and Global Leadership: Recommendations for the G-8 Genoa Summit from the G-8 Preparatory Conference* (Turin, Italy: Institute for International Economics, 2001), 23-9.

<sup>22</sup> John J. Kirton, "Toward Multilateral Reform: The G20's Contribution," in English et al. *Reforming from the Top*, 141-68.

development banks, and would be supported by think tanks that would prepare discussion papers and policy proposals.<sup>23</sup>

CFGFS directors and former senior Canadian diplomats Barry Carin and Gordon Smith examine the record of the G7/G8, and draw up two alternative scenarios for the G8/L20 - one that would turn the existing G8 summit plus the finance G20 into a leaders' level L20, and the other that would see the G8 leaders continuing to meet with leaders of the South and of the emerging economies outside the UN framework. They then outline the possible machinery and membership of a legitimate, effective L20 (their preferred outcome), and the path to achieve this goal incrementally. The L20 would: restrict its agenda to a few carefully selected issues that require highest-level negotiation and guidance; track the leaders' commitments regularly but without developing a bureaucracy; and issue brief communiqués reflecting actual discussions and negotiations.<sup>24</sup>

Colin I. Bradford prefers a more rapid establishment of an L20 which would have an agenda aimed at: strengthening institutions of global governance; improving transparency; enhancing dialogue with emerging market economies; poverty reduction and support for the Millennium Development Goals; and incorporating cultural pluralism into the economic policy process.<sup>25</sup> In an earlier paper, Bradford and Johannes F. Linn marshal three pragmatic reasons for upgrading the G20 to the leaders' level: the shifting demographic and economic balance away from G7 countries and toward emerging market economies; the need for more representative

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<sup>23</sup> Angel Gurría, "A Leaders' 20 Summit?" in English et al., *Reforming from the Top*, 63-71.

<sup>24</sup> Barry Carin and Gordon Smith, "Making Change Happen at the Global Level," in English et al., *Reforming from the Top*, 25-45.

<sup>25</sup> Colin I. Bradford, "Anticipating the Future: A Political Agenda for Global Economic Governance," in English et al., *Reforming from the Top*, 46-62.

global governance; and, the key role of emerging market economies in the occurrence and impact of global economic crises and in responses to these crises.<sup>26</sup>

Richard Higgott, Foundation Director of the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, points to structural changes in the world economy and the increasing weight of major emerging economies (China, India, Mexico, Brazil, South Korea) - even though the G7/G8 is still dominant. He sees these changes as progressively reducing the role of the G7/G8, and making the extension of the G7/G8 to a leaders' level G20 rational and just, at least theoretically. This would help bridge the legitimacy gap of the current G7/G8. How to manage this transition, though, is fraught with problems.<sup>27</sup>

York University professor Daniel Drache argues that within this reordered international system new challenges have arisen for L20 countries from the public sphere, and that global dynamics have shifted from the previous, primarily economic configuration to a more complex arrangement, with the new dimensions of cultural power and collective identity. These have become a battleground for dissent against US trade policies and cultural industries.<sup>28</sup>

In her chapter, Anne-Marie Slaughter, Dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, surveys a variety of government networks including the G8, the Financial Stability Forum, and the G20. Viewing such

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<sup>26</sup> Colin I. Bradford and Johannes F. Linn, "Global Economic Governance at a Crossroads: Replacing the G-7 with the G-20," *Brookings Institution Policy Brief*, no. 131 (April 2004).

<sup>27</sup> Richard Higgott, "Multilateralism and the Limits of Global Governance," in English et al., *Reforming from the Top*, 72-96.

<sup>28</sup> Daniel Drache, "The Political Economy of Dissent: Global Publics after Cancún," in English et al., *Reforming from the Top*, 121-40.



institutions as networks, possibilities of a future world order emerge, in which states and traditional international organizations continue to function, and possibilities of a future world order emerge, but the building blocks of these networks are not states themselves but elements of states such as ministries, regulatory agencies, legislatures or courts. Dr. Slaughter notes that government networks are already creating convergence, improving compliance with rules and increasing international co-operation; and argues that recognizing such networks (along with new ones) as the prime mechanism of global governance would greatly increase their capacities and impact. In that light, she proposes transforming the G20 into a more robust institution, give the enhanced G20 a presence in major international organizations, and use the advantages of other networks in which the G20 members are participants.<sup>29</sup> With this intellectual input, the central ideas of the L20 took shape, and the scope of the discussion was expanded, both in terms of membership and issues.

## **Generating Support**

To create, expand or reform a forum of nations, one must first get these nations to buy into the idea. By the G8's very nature, world leaders must enthusiastically endorse it - but politically and logistically this has proven to be difficult. Among heads of state or government, former Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin has clearly been the foremost champion of the L20. He generated some support among his peers, but the position and attitude of the US have consistently remained unclear. Higgott has highlighted the distinctions between the US and European, and the US and East Asian positions on multilateralism and global governance, particularly under the current US administration. He points to

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<sup>29</sup> Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Government Networks, World Order, and the L20," in English et al., *Reforming from the Top*, 281-95.

the Bush foreign policy trend of "US primacy" and its selectivity in multilateral engagements.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps it should not be surprising, then, that an overly self-interested and economically dominant "G1" is not responsive to opening the exclusive club to more players.

The number two economy of the world has also been lukewarm on the initiative. Saori Katada affirms Japan's support for the G7-led process of global financial architecture and for the finance ministers' G20, but is silent on Japanese attitudes toward an L20.<sup>31</sup> Kirton states that "the G8 leaders themselves ... are strongly attached to the G8, and would refuse or be reluctant to let it die."<sup>32</sup> Parallels can be drawn to proposals to reform the United Nations Security Council, where those with the veto-wielding power are the only ones that can change the rules of the game. A significant part of the CIGI/CFGS project has been to broaden understanding of the initiative among the G8 and prospective L20 member countries by including academics and practitioners from each nation. This process was meant to build intellectual foundations for the initiative internationally, and was accomplished in three stages. The first phase of the project consisted of three conferences for constructing a framework for a G20 at the leaders' level. The first, called *The Future of the G-20: A Mechanism for International Governance*, took place in Waterloo, Ontario, in October 2003; it discussed the concept of the transformation of the financial G20 into an L20; the impact of an L20 on the G7/G8; the composition of an L20; the potential mandate of the L20; the role, if any, of civil society; and the way to achieve an L20. Another conference, in Bellagio, Italy, in December 2003, *Capacity Building, Lessons*

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<sup>30</sup> Higgott, "Multilateralism and the Limits of Global Governance."

<sup>31</sup> Saori N. Katada, "Balancing Act: Japan's Strategy in Global and Regional Financial Governance," in English et al., *Reforming from the Top*, 97-120.

<sup>32</sup> John J. Kirton, "Getting the L20 Going: Reaching out from the G8," Paper prepared to the workshop, *G20 to Replace the G8: Why Not Now?*, sponsored by the Brookings Institution, Institute for International Economics, and the Centre for Global Governance, Washington, DC, 22 September 2004.

*and Future Directions*, tackled the themes of: IMF accountability; the concept of the leaders-level G20; capacity development at the country level; peer review and public-private partnership in developing countries; the Helsinki process on globalization and democracy; and, an assessment of the CFGS NEPAD capacity-building initiative. And the third conference, *The G-20 at Leaders' Level?*, met in Ottawa in February 2004. Then-Prime Minister Martin was an important part of this conference, delivering the keynote address to participants, and was introduced by his minister of foreign affairs. The conference took a realistic look at the prospects of the L20 initiative, and discussed the idea of "if you build it, they will come", and the question of "how do we get there from here?"<sup>33</sup> For these and successive conferences, a core group of academics and practitioners were included in the project, and special effort was given to including a range of participants from each of the prospective L20 countries.

The second phase of the project involved seven conferences, each one exploring a specific theme (agricultural subsidies; post-Kyoto environmental architecture, global health, terrorism, access to water, financial crises, and UN reform). It concluded with a stocktaking meeting in February 2005, which discussed process and structure of the L20, its potential agenda, and criteria for selection of topics. It noted that there was considerable support for the L20 idea from non-G8 members of the G20, but G8 countries varied in their enthusiasm, Japan and the US being the most reticent, though they "would likely accept a one-off meeting if the topic was right." The meeting concluded that a modest, low-key beginning was most likely, with a leaders' dinner or lunch established on the margins of a future UN General Assembly session, with the hope that the leaders would decide to meet again

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<sup>33</sup> For specific conference papers and reports, see *L20: A Leaders' Forum*, <<http://www.l20.org>>.

a year later. The guiding principles for any future meetings would be a limited agenda of issues that are already being considered but need a high-level push; informality; avoiding becoming a world directorate; and networking with other governments and non-state actors.<sup>34</sup> (No such meeting took place in 2005 or 2006.)

The third phase of the L20 project focused on research and advice through conferences and workshops, held around the world, to explore global issues for the potential L20 agenda. The Centre for Global Studies (CFGS), co-sponsor of the project, identified the initial topics for this phase. Eleven conferences and workshops have been held, respectively devoted to: the five-year review of the UN Millennium Summit; pandemics; fragile states; UN reform; energy security; international fishing governance; improving official development assistance; regimes to control weapons of mass destruction; financing global public goods; furthering science and technology; and international institutional reform and global governance.<sup>35</sup> This series has added depth to the L20 initiative by examining and promoting a comprehensive set of issues and has developed a credible case for why it should be the leaders who meet to address them.

The CIGI/CFGS conference series concluded that support from the South, particularly from China and India, is crucial for the success of the L20 idea. Former Indian cabinet minister Yoginder Alagh, presenting the concerns his country (a key member of the G20), emphasizes that the restructuring of the G20 into an L20 must be based on knowledge networks and links between the local, the national and the global, in order to create a level playing field for developing countries.<sup>36</sup> In his discussion of

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<sup>34</sup> *Report on L-20 Stocktaking Conference*, Ottawa, 19-20 February 2005: 1, 5.

<sup>35</sup> For a complete list of conference themes and project research, see *L20: A Leaders' Forum*, <<http://www.l20.org>>.

<sup>36</sup> Yoginder K. Alagh, "On Sherpas and Coolies: The L20 and Non-Brahmanical Futures," in English et al., *Reforming from the Top*, 169-86.

China's evolving global position, with a special emphasis on its relations with the G7/G8 and the G20, Professor Yu Yongding of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences notes that China, not really wishing to become a member of the G7/G8, has nonetheless entered into a dialogue with it. An active member and 2005 host of the financial G20, China supports it as a continuing complement to the G7/G8 and feels that transforming the G20 into an L20 is premature at present.<sup>37</sup>

Looking at other key members of the G20, Ricardo Sennes and Alexandre de Freitas Barbosa highlight the contrast between Brazil's foreign policy activism in the trade area and relative passivity in the international financial fora. They show that Brazil has preferred to act more forcefully in a regional context and bilaterally, rather than globally. They conclude that Brazil's position on the L20 proposals is positive though sceptical.<sup>38</sup>

Ian Taylor analyzes South Africa's place in the network of coalitions and fora, and concludes that there is a need to manage both globalization and financial governance, and that there is positive potential in a G20-turned-L20 as an institution comprising both developed and emerging market economies.<sup>39</sup> Specifically, this membership composition would allow for elevated discussions to resolve existing negotiations, in the view of Brendan Vickers. The Senior Researcher at South Africa's Institute for Global Dialogue sees the L20 as better equipped than the G8 to provide solutions to the stalled Doha Round in particular, but also more generally to provide African nations the ability to trade on a level

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<sup>37</sup> Yu Yongding, "China's Evolving Global View," in English et al., *Reforming from the Top*, 187-200.

<sup>38</sup> Ricardo U. Sennes and Alexandre de Freitas Barbosa, "Brazil's Multiple Forms of External Engagement: Foreign Policy Dilemmas," in English et al., *Reforming from the Top*, 201-29.

<sup>39</sup> Ian Taylor, "South Africa: Beyond the Impasse of Global Governance," in English et al., *Reforming from the Top*, 230-59.

playing field.<sup>40</sup> Writing from an Egyptian perspective, Abdel Moneim Said underlines the need for organizational reform or new fora to deal with the challenges and promises of globalization, and argues that a reformed G20 or an L20 would help remedy the representativeness gap of the G8 and still function effectively.<sup>41</sup>

The report of a high-level UN panel on "threats, challenges and change" notes briefly that it would be helpful for policy impetus and coherence to transform the finance ministers' G20 into a leaders' group. Such a body would bring together leaders of key developed and developing countries collectively accounting for 80 per cent of the world's population and 90 per cent of the world's economic activity. The panel requests that, in addition to the heads of the IMF, World Bank, WTO and EU, the L20 include the UN Secretary-General and the president of ECOSOC in order "to ensure strong support for United Nations programmes and initiatives."<sup>42</sup> In this context, Andrew F. Cooper and Thomas Fues call for two complementary steps to enhance effectiveness in global governance: reforming ECOSOC, thereby enabling it to function effectively as a global forum for policy advocacy and co-ordination; and establishing the L20 based on the composition of the present G20 of finance ministers and central bank governors. The G7/G8 could then either be dissolved or carried on as a parallel, informal network.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Brendan Vickers, "Heading towards the G-8 St. Petersburg Summit: What's in it for Africa?" *Global Insight*, no. 63 (July 2006), Institute for Global Dialogue, 4.

<sup>41</sup> Ali Abdel Moneim Said, "The L20 and the Restructuring of the International Economic Order: An Egyptian Perspective," in English et al., *Reforming from the Top*, 260-80.

<sup>42</sup> United Nations, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (New York: United Nations, 2004): 88.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew F. Cooper and Thomas Fues, "L20 and ECOSOC Reform: Complementary Building Blocks for Inclusive Global Governance and a More Effective UN," *Briefing Paper*, no. 6/2005 (Bonn: Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik, 2005).

## Current State of the L20

Paul Martin, although no longer in government, continues to champion the L20 at home and around the world. In an interview reported on 1 June 2006, he talked about his impending trip to Germany "to further his ambition of creating a new League of Nations - the L-20." The venue of this was a conference focusing on the L20 idea, organized by the Development and Peace Foundation in Dresden, Germany, where Martin was featured as the lead speaker. It would be important if Germany, holder of the 2007 presidency of the G8, supported the idea.<sup>44</sup> Ideally, support should also come from one of the major developing or emerging-market countries. Martin emphasized that the world was "no longer unipolar. China and India are major players. I believe the L-20 is going to happen."<sup>45</sup> In his speech to this conference - officially, *Multilateralism in Transition: Summer Dialogue 2006* - Martin discussed the origins of the G20 finance ministers' forum, and stated that the G20 had come into being "because we needed a body that could form the consensus required to deal on a timely basis with economic issues that had global repercussions." Now, other global issues, such as growth, aid, trade, environment, and poverty, necessitate an L20 where government leaders can deal with these problems at the highest political level.

Martin then outlined the set of questions facing the L20: criteria of membership; continuation or cessation of the G8; comple-

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<sup>44</sup> In November 2006, Chancellor Angela Merkel submitted her draft agenda for the German G8 presidency. The main themes of the June 2007 summit in Heiligendamm will be "growth and responsibility". The two centerpieces of the agenda are: investment, innovation and sustainability; and Africa (emphasizing good governance, sustainable investment, and peace and security. The issue of summit reform is clearly absent. Germany, Bundesregierung, "Focuses of the German G-8 Presidency," *G8 Summit 2007: Heiligendamm*, 18 November 2006. Available online: <<http://www.g-8.de/Webs/G8/EN/Agenda/agenda.html>>.

<sup>45</sup> Lawrence Martin, "Miles To Go before Martin Sleeps," *The Globe and Mail*, 1 June 2006, A1, 7.

entarity with the UN; initial agenda; and modus operandi. The L20 should bring together the existing G8 and "other leading economies." Criteria of membership would include "the requisite social and political stability" and major regional powers, such as Egypt and Nigeria, should be included. With the establishment of the L20, the G8 itself should continue to play its own role. He put forth that the G8+5 formula, with guests invited to parts of the meeting, was no substitute for an L20. "What is needed for successful international dialogue, is the kind of familiarity, the recognition that only comes from people who have met often as a group, who know they will continue to meet in the future and who know the dynamics of the room. That's what happens at the G8, it's what happens at the G20, and it's what should happen at the L20." Initial agenda of the L20 would be focus on issues where "core political leadership is needed": on energy, health, environment, or trade. For such a format to appeal to leaders, Martin submitted that an L20 should issue no communiqués (rather an overview by the chair), and should have no secretariat (except perhaps for the initial start-up), and no "set piece" speeches but rather natural discussion among the leaders who "should break free of the briefing book syndrome."<sup>46</sup>

By late 2006 it became clear that twenty may be too high a number for the efficient functioning of a new leaders' forum and for building and maintaining the necessary rapport among them. Thus, a new concept of a G14 emerged. This would involve a leaders' forum of the present G8 plus Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa, as well as Egypt, a major Islamic country, to assure representation for a crucially important constituency. The agenda of this expanded leaders' forum would focus on the

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<sup>46</sup> Paul Martin, "Speaking notes for the Right Honourable Paul Martin P.C., M.P.: Annual Meeting of the Development and Peace Foundation," Dresden, Germany, 8 June 2006.



following major issues: infectious diseases (avian flu and others) and public health; energy security; development; and nuclear proliferation.<sup>47</sup>

There are, however, significant obstacles to progress on these issues. Thus, the Centre for Global Studies is presently co-ordinating a "Breaking Global Deadlocks" project, as a "proof of concept" for an actual leaders' forum, designed to test and demonstrate the feasibility of this expanded leaders' forum. The project would, if successful, "translate the L-20 idea from a theory into a credible technique which can be usefully applied to solve the shifting, complex challenges of global governance in the twenty-first century." The Breaking Global Deadlocks project brings together former government officials former government officials who will, after three preparatory meetings, hold a simulation exercise, a "mock leaders' forum summit. The function of sherpas (the leaders' personal representatives) would be provided by representatives from universities and think tanks."<sup>48</sup>

The merit of this concept is threefold: first, it builds on the G8+5 formula that is already implanted in the existing G8 configuration, starting with the Gleneagles summit in 2005 and continuing at the 2006 St. Petersburg summit. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has affirmed her country's determination to continue this practice at the 2007 Heiligendamm summit. In fact, she went further: in January 2007, in her opening address at the World Economic Forum in Davos, she signalled her wish to deepen the integration of the "+5" into the summit process. She announced

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<sup>47</sup> Centre for Global Studies, "L20 Findings: Outcomes and Conclusions," *L20: A Leaders' Forum*, 12 September 2006. Available online: <<http://www.l20.org/findings.php>> (accessed 25 February 2007).

<sup>48</sup> Centre for Global Studies, "Next Steps: Breaking Global Deadlocks," *L20: A Leaders' Forum*, 12 September 2006. Available online: <<http://www.l20.org/nextsteps.php>> (accessed 25 February 2007).

"new forms of dialogue" between the G8 and emerging economies such as Brazil, India, China, and also Mexico and South Africa.<sup>49</sup> Second, the proposed G14 core agenda is rooted in actual, current major global concerns. And third, it involves the participation of government officials who are completely familiar with the process and dynamics of actual summitry.

It is worth noting that this possible initial agenda is proposed from outside the group of currently serving leaders, in contrast with the agenda-setting of the G7/G8. There, particularly in the early years of summitry, agenda-setting and evolution occurred among the G7/G8 officials themselves, though more recently that process has, to some extent, been influenced from outside sources - non-G8 governments, civil society and other actors. If the G14 or the L20 comes into being, it can be expected that the leaders would take "ownership" of their agenda, possibly in consultation with other stakeholders.

G14 or L20 relations with other governments, civil society, international organizations, and the business sector would have to be a major consideration in the design of this proposed new forum. The February 2005 stocktaking meeting, referred to above, notes that a "key element ... may be creating non-governmental and governmental networks to feed in and disseminate out from the L20."<sup>50</sup> A roundtable discussion held at a conference on global democracy and civil society in May 2005 grappled with the issue of how civil society could and should interact with the proposed L20.<sup>51</sup> Modalities of this interaction could range from civil society distancing itself from the L20 (eschewing dialogue or other

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<sup>49</sup> World Economic Forum, "Merkel Urges New Dialogue and Closer Atlantic Partnership," *World Economic Forum - Press Releases*, 24 January 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Report on L-20 Stocktaking Conference, Ottawa, 19-20 February 2005: 1, 5.

<sup>51</sup> *G05 Global Democracy: Civil Society Visions and Strategies Conference*, Montreal, 31 May 2005.

engagement) to taking advantage of the opportunities that engagement would afford both to civil society and to the L20, with various combinations of action in-between. The phenomenon of civil society taking initiatives would apply; even if the L20 chooses not to engage with NGO groups, civil society would find ways to influence the L20 agenda and press for dialogue or other interaction.

The L20, as Andrew F. Cooper points out, "remains very much a work in progress." While it does not offer "a big bang solution ... it is grounded on the need to overcome sluggishness in the global system." He argues that, if "the forces of globalization can be conditioned, the big rising/risen powers must be brought in to the apex of power and responsibility."<sup>52</sup>

## 6. Other Recent Proposals

Another interesting initiative is found in a 2004 book published by the Centre for Economic Policy Research and the International Center for Monetary and Banking Studies. The authors, Peter B. Kenen, Jeffrey Shafer, Nigel Wicks and Charles Wyplosz, trace the evolution of international economic and financial co-operation and conclude that its machinery is becoming obsolete (although they acknowledge the G7's record of negotiating joint positions and using its influence in the Bretton Woods institutions). They offer far-reaching recommendations for putting in place new structures: make room for new players, for instance by streamlining European representation in the G7 and in the IMF Executive Board; establish a new G4 bringing together the US, the euro zone, Japan and China to deal with exchange rate problems and

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<sup>52</sup> Andrew F. Cooper, "Opening up Governance from the Top: The L20 as a project of 'New Multilateralism' and 'New Regionalism'," *Korean Journal of International Organizations*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2006): 132.

adjustments; convene an Independent Wise Persons Review Group to examine existing institutions and groups, including the G7 which is experiencing diminishing legitimacy and problems with representativeness; and establish a Council for International Financial and Economic Cooperation, another new body with membership not exceeding 15, which would set agenda and provide strategic direction for the international financial system and would oversee multilateral institutions of international economic co-operation. This council would include the systemically important countries, represented by their finance ministers. The heads of the UN, IMF, World Bank and WTO would be invited to the council's meetings.<sup>53</sup> Commenting on this book, *The Economist* agrees that the G7 today is not what it was and is now only one of an "alphanumeric panoply of bodies" attempting to coordinate economic policies. (This does not address the wide range of non-economic issues that the G8's agenda has come to embrace.) *The Economist* notes with approval the book's proposal to give China its rightful place in the structure of macroeconomic diplomacy, stating that without China, "the G7 cannot hope to achieve much."<sup>54</sup>

In a somewhat similar vein, Stephen Roach of Morgan Stanley, noting in 2005 that the global economy was in need of major steps for rebalancing, recommended a new architecture for economic policy co-ordination. One of these steps would be to replace the G7 with a new G5 consisting of the US, the euro zone, Japan, the UK and China. Roach argues that the G7 is a creature of a different era and he finds it particularly odd that it excludes China while giving the EU euro-zone three votes (Germany,

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<sup>53</sup> Peter B. Kenen, Jeffrey Shafer, Nigel Wicks, and Charles Wyplosz, *International Economic and Financial Cooperation: New Issues, New Actors, New Responses* (London: Centre for Economic Policy Research, 2004).

<sup>54</sup> *The Economist*, "G-Force: The G7 No Longer Governs the World Economy. Does Anyone?" *The Economist*, vol. 373, no. 8396 (9 October 2004): 72.

France and Italy). His G5 would be a full-fledged organization based on a charter that would embrace in its mandate all aspects of global economic imbalances. It would have a permanent staff. It would hold semi-annual meetings based on consultations of the finance ministries and central banks of the member states with the G5's staff of experts. The staff would produce semi-annual reports to serve as agenda for the formal meetings.<sup>55</sup> Like the proposal by Kenen and his colleagues, Roach's ideas do not account for the non-economic agenda of the present G8 - the environment, security, global health, and other transnational issues.

In a 2005 paper, Colin I. Bradford argues that the existing "institutional framework for dealing with contemporary global challenges does not match the scope, scale and nature of the challenges themselves", notably those embodied in the Millennium Development Goals and the Millennium Declaration. One aspect of this mismatch is the G8 and the broader G8 system as now constituted. Given considerable reluctance to major reform and expansion of the G8 into a true L20, Bradford suggests adding a few regular core members (the leading candidates being China, India, Brazil and South Africa) to the G8 - turning it into a G12 - and allocating six additional places to other countries that would participate on a rotating basis, depending on particular issues on the agenda. This formula would enhance both the representativeness and the legitimacy of the summit mechanism and would provide top-level strategic leadership to the whole international system.<sup>56</sup>

Edwin Truman of the Institute for International Economics would wish to see disbanding the G7/G8 and moving many of

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<sup>55</sup> Stephen Roach, "How To Fix the World," *Global Economic Forum* (December 2004): 9-10.

<sup>56</sup> Colin I. Bradford, "Global Governance for the 21st Century," Paper prepared for the Brookings Institution and The Centre for International Governance Innovation Governance, 2005, 5, 20, 23-25.

the latter's policy co-ordination functions to the G20. He argues that this strengthening of the G20 would be a major step in rationalizing the institutions of international economic co-operation. In addition to representation at the level of leaders, ministers of finance and central bank governors, he calls for ad hoc working groups as well. He sees the United States and the euro area as leaders of this strengthened G20. At the same time, he envisions as well informal policy co-ordination of the US and the euro area as an "informal G2."<sup>57</sup> The "finance G2" concept is explored by Shadow G-8 chair C. Fred Bergsten, who argues that "Euroland" and the US need a new G2 mechanism not only to monitor and consult on the evolution of the dollar-euro exchange rate but, more ambitiously, also to develop a new G2 monetary regime. This "finance G2" would not be a substitute for the G7 and would function informally and without even public announcement of its existence and activities.<sup>58</sup>

Canadian academic and former senior diplomat George Haynal makes the case for a "G-XX" - a more comprehensive and representative summit process, where "XX" does not necessarily stand for "twenty" but implies that the number of members of such a new group is an open question. He argues that such a more inclusive summit "would express the changing nature and balance of power and assist our shared institutions to function better by providing them with the appropriate political direction." Haynal outlines the weaknesses of the existing international system of

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<sup>57</sup> Edwin M. Truman, "The Euro and Prospects for Policy Coordination," Draft paper prepared for the conference on *The Euro at Five: Ready for a Global Role*, 26 February 2004, 20.

<sup>58</sup> C. Fred Bergsten, "The Euro and the Dollar: Toward a 'Finance G-2'?" Paper prepared for the conference on *The Euro at Five: Ready for a Global Role*, 26 February 2004, 1, 9-10. The G2 concept is explored more fully in C. Fred Bergsten and Caio Koch-Weser, "The G-2: A New Conceptual Basis and Operating Modality for Transatlantic Economic Relations," in Werner Weidenfeld et al., eds, *From Alliance To Coalitions: The Future of Transatlantic Relations* (Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers, 2004).

institutions: the UN Security Council, General Assembly, specialized agencies including the Bretton Woods institutions; the WTO. He suggests that new global issues, as well as linkages among international institutions now missing could be addressed by a "G-XX". He identifies the core membership of the G-XX: the existing G8; China, India, South Africa, Brazil and possibly Mexico; and representation from Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, the Americas and the former Soviet bloc.

Haynal sees the G-XX as functioning alongside the G8, not replacing it. Differing from the L20 initiative, he considers that transforming the G20 finance ministers' forum into a leaders' level summit would overburden the G20; nonetheless, he would proceed from the existing composition of the G20. Finally, he recommends starting with a "one-off" process of the leaders, meeting perhaps on the margins of the General Assembly, and focusing on global security as the initial agenda.<sup>59</sup> Such a step would be welcomed by Klaus Schwab, the president of the World Economic Forum, who is reported to have proposed a similar meeting. He has termed this a "P21" meeting of heads of government (using the terminology of the Security Council), focusing on global security issues. He is further reported to have said "that the creation of the P21 should mean the end of the G8."<sup>60</sup>

Media comments around the time of the 2005 Gleneagles summit reflected increasing frustration with the current membership of the G8. In a comment piece in the *Financial Times* just before the 2005 Gleneagles summit, Richard Haas called the G8 "increa-

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<sup>59</sup> George Haynal, "Summitry and Governance: The Case for a G-XX," in David Carment, Fen Osler Hampson and Norman Hillmer, eds, *Canada among Nations 2004: Setting Priorities Straight* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2005), 261-74.

<sup>60</sup> *Report of Capacity Building, Lessons and Future Directions*, Bellagio, Italy, 8-12 December 2003.

singly an anachronism" and added: "No one today would propose an annual meeting that includes Canada (population of 31 m[illion], gross domestic product of \$870 b[illion] ... , Italy (58m and \$1,200bn) and Russia (144m and \$615bn) but not China (1.3bn and \$1,650bn) and India (1.1bn and \$650bn)." He argued: "The G8 needs to become the G10. Both China and India deserve a seat.... It would be a concession to reality that would benefit everyone."<sup>61</sup> Another article in the same newspaper suggests, along somewhat similar lines, that restructuring the G8 should be considered, eliminating the membership of Canada and Italy, and stating: [n]or should Russia have membership when China, India and Brazil do not." Moreover, Africa and the Islamic world should be represented.<sup>62</sup>

In February 2006 Philip Stephens of the *Financial Times* carried this argument further, by stating: "yesterday's global architecture does not always fit today's world. In some instances, institutions created over the past six decades have outlived their usefulness." Among reforms he advocates is a radical paring down of the IMF which "has been overtaken by events ... its expensive bureaucracy and a power structure decades out of date" would warrant closing it down, with remaining functions transferred to the World Bank and the OECD, and its "nameplate ... [used] as a badge for a small secretariat serving a new club to replace the present Group of Eight nations." The G8, he argues, "was originally conceived as a forum for fireside chats between leaders of big western democracies. It has been left behind by political and economic change."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Richard Haas, "Leaders Have a Flawed Gleneagles Agenda," *Financial Times*, 1 July 2005, 19.

<sup>62</sup> Jeffrey Garten, "Russia's Leadership of the Group of Eight Will Be Farcical," *Financial Times*, 28 June 2005, 23.

<sup>63</sup> Philip Stephens, "Only by Reshaping the Postwar Settlement Can It Be Preserved," *Financial Times*, 24 February 2006.



In the lead-up to Australia's hosting of the G20 finance ministers in November 2006, Mark Thirwell and Malcolm Cook of the Lowy Institute advocated that Australia not consider the L20 upgrade. In their view, it is "a non-starter and would serve only to distract attention from the more pressing task of improving the status of the G-20 itself," at least in the short-term. Indeed, they do argue that the idea makes sense in the long-term, but that without consensus on the issue and no immediate prospect of the US or Japan signing onto the reform, combined with the absence of a G8 leader championing the idea (following Paul Martin's electoral defeat), efforts by Australia to "push for progress in this direction would be both futile and counterproductive".<sup>64</sup> Alternatively, should the steady evolution and expansion of the agenda of the G20 finance ministers' forum move the G20 beyond the competence of finance ministers and central bank governors, the transformation of the G20 into an L20 could be facilitated.

Despite this negative take on summit reform in the immediate term, the concept of expanding the G8 was raised again in early 2006 by the Institute of International Economics, with the proposal that China, India, Brazil and South Africa be invited as full members, thus transforming the G8 into a more representative G12. The inclusion of non-democratic China would make sense since with Russia's presidency of the G8 it is evident that a democratic form of government is no longer a criterion for membership in the club.<sup>65</sup> More significantly, because it concerns the view of a key G8 leader, just two days before the St. Petersburg summit, it was reported that British Prime Minister Tony Blair had planned to call for making China, India, Brazil, South Africa

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<sup>64</sup> Mark Thirwell and Malcolm Cook, "Geeing up the G-20," *Policy Brief*, Lowy Institute for International Policy (April 2006): 1, 13.

<sup>65</sup> Anders Åslund, "Russia's Challenges as Chair of the G-8," *Policy Briefs in International Economics*, no. PB06-3 (Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 2006): 7.

and Mexico full-fledged members, turning the G8 into the G13. This would build on the "G8+5" formula established at Gleneagles. Focusing on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, Blair stated: "There is no way we can deal with climate change unless we get an agreement that binds in the US, China and India. We have got to get an agreement with a binding framework - of that I am in no doubt at all." The fact that Brazil and India are principal players in trade negotiations also speaks to the need to make the G8+5 arrangement more formal.<sup>66</sup>

Other proposals presented in 2006, along with rising criticism of Russia's antidemocratic tendencies, include reviving the G7 while preserving the G8 as well. This G7 would again be a forum of the core democratic countries, and could usefully address issues on which Russia has little to contribute; for example, on trade, given the fact that Russia is not yet a member of the WTO.<sup>67</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

There is a widespread perception of the structural, procedural, democratic and other shortcomings of the present G8 and the need to reform or replace it. This perception is not restricted to the news media, academia and civil society but has also been expressed by some former and even present officials of various G8 governments associated with summit preparation, conduct and follow-up. As this paper has outlined, there is no shortage of reform proposals, ranging from abolishing the G8 altogether to expanding or reducing its membership, rationalizing its agenda

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<sup>66</sup> Larry Elliott and Patrick Wintour, "Blair wants Developing Nations in New G13 to Help Secure Key Deals," *The Guardian*, 13 July 2006.

<sup>67</sup> See John Edwards, Jack Kemp and Stephen Sestanovich, "Russia's Wrong Direction: What the United States Can and Should Do," *Task Force Report*, no. 57 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, March 2006); and Åslund, "Russia's Challenges as Chair of the G-8."

and processes, increasing its legitimacy and representativeness, replacing it with a new body, or supplementing it with additional bodies or a permanent secretariat. Many of these proposals have merit, and some have high-level advocates. The ultimate outcome may be promoted by various constituencies, but will have to be endorsed and agreed by the leaders of the present G8 and G20.

There are many possible trajectories that the G8 could take. It could continue with fixed membership but a flexible agenda and dynamic processes that would allow involving other important countries without absorbing them as members. It could carry on but function in parallel with a revived G7. It could expand and become more representative, more responsive to global issues, and bringing together greater capacity to deal with those issues, by inviting key countries (particularly China, India, Brazil and South Africa). It could be turned into a more representative (but perhaps less efficient) L20, or, more realistically, grow incrementally to a G13 and perhaps G14. It could continue as G8 but work alongside with an L20. It could disappear. Or it could evolve in unexpected ways. But, in light of the diversity of many reform initiatives, the reality-based G13/G14 initiative with a carefully focused agenda, perhaps leading eventually to an L20, remains an attractive option.

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