

# **Promoting Conflict Prevention and Human Security What Can the G8 Do?**

## **Concentrating the Mind: Decision-Making in the G7/G8 System**

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*“When a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight,  
it concentrates his mind wonderfully.” (Johnson)*

### **Introduction**

This paper is not about conflict prevention as such. It is instead about how decisions are made – on conflict prevention or any other subject – at the G8 summit and in the G7/G8 system as a whole. Summit meetings like the G7 and G8, where heads of government meet informally in a small group, are a device to ‘concentrate minds’ on cooperative decision-making, in response to intractable problems where international and domestic pressures interact.

For about 15 years after the G7 summits began, decision-making took place on two closely-knit levels. One level comprised the heads of government themselves and the foreign and finance ministers who always accompanied them to the summit. The second was composed of a small team of bureaucrats led by the head’s personal representative or ‘sherpa’. Follow-up was entrusted to wider institutions. But during the 1990s, the shape of the G7/G8 summits changed radically. The heads of government detached their flanking ministers and began meeting by themselves. The supporting apparatus, at both official and ministerial level, became much more complex and developed a life of its own. Many more outside contributors became involved both in the preparation of the summits and in their follow-up.

This paper examines the recent development of decision-making in the G7/G8 system.<sup>1</sup> The analysis falls under three headings:

- The contribution of the heads themselves;
- The contribution of the supporting apparatus;
- The contribution of other actors, both state and non-state.

Most of the examples will be drawn from economic activities, but there will also be reference to political ones, especially conflict prevention.

The main conclusions of this paper are:

- The heads of government have gained new freedom by meeting on their own. They contribute independently to decision making by innovation, especially in agenda-setting and procedural initiatives, and by following their political reflexes. Meeting their international peers concentrates the minds of the heads most when this also advances their domestic agenda.
- Most cooperation at the summit still emerges from the work of the supporting apparatus, whether by the sherpa team or the growing network of G7/G8 ministerial groups. The preparations enable the heads to add their authority to work in progress; to induce agreement at lower levels, without acting themselves; and at times to go further than is possible at lower levels. The imminence of the summit concentrates the minds of other ministers and bureaucrats – but will it still do so if the summits become more detached from their base?
- Other actors – non-G8 governments, business and NGOs - are increasingly involved both in summit preparation and, alongside international institutions, in follow-up. The institutions are treated more persuasively and systematically than before. This greater dispersion and transparency is necessary, if the summits are to concentrate the increasingly independent minds of other players in the system. But will it lead to a loss of efficiency?
- The tensions between the greater freedom of the heads, the proliferation of the supporting apparatus and the growing involvement of other actors are not easily resolved and each summit finds a different equilibrium. But the treatment of conflict prevention should follow a predictable sequence.

## **Decision-Making in the G7/G8 Summits: A. The Contribution of the Heads**

The G7 summit was conceived as a personal encounter of the leaders of the world's most powerful economies. The founders believed that bringing the heads of government together would enable them to understand better both the domestic problems of their peers and the international responsibilities that they all shared. This would enable them to solve problems that had baffled their bureaucrats. The bureaucrats themselves ought to be kept out of the process entirely.<sup>ii</sup>

Even before the first summit of all, at Rambouillet 1975, it was clear that this vision was out of reach. The subject-matter of international economics was too complex for the heads to reach decisions without some preparation. So they reconciled themselves to playing roles at the summit which had been written for them by others, especially their personal representatives or 'sherpas'. This was the first stage in institutionalising the summits.<sup>iii</sup> But the prospect of informal and spontaneous contacts, at which they could develop their own ideas, continues to exercise a powerful attraction on the heads. This section of the paper therefore looks at the ways in which the heads make their personal contribution to the summit, without relying on the supporting apparatus.

### *The Heads and Summit Process*

During the 1990s, the heads always professed to want summit procedures made simpler. They complained that the agenda and the documents were too long, giving them no scope to make their own input. As will appear, however, some of their own practices contributed to this expansion.

*Size.* Once the size of the summit had been settled in the 1970s, at seven powers plus the European Community, the heads resisted any move to add new members. They believed small numbers were essential to informal exchanges. As British prime minister Callaghan had said in 1976:

“The numbers attending are small and compact. Discussions are businesslike and to the point. We do not make speeches at one another. We talk frankly but also as briefly as we can, and a lot of ground is covered.”<sup>iv</sup>

In 1991 the heads agreed that British prime minister Major could invite Soviet president Gorbachev as a guest to the London III 1991 summit. But once the Russians came, the G7 had to go on inviting them, as a refusal would be a severe setback to post-Cold War reconciliation. By skilful salami tactics, Russian president Yeltsin got invited to more and more of the summit. Eventually, US president Clinton called Denver 1997 ‘the Summit of the Eight’, while British prime minister Blair made Birmingham 1998 the first G8 summit.

Despite the political reasons for adding Russia, this enlargement has drawbacks. Yeltsin used to ‘make speeches’ at his colleagues, though his successor Putin picked up the informal mode at once at Okinawa 2000. Russia’s comparative economic weakness means that some issues still have to be kept in the G7. So the heads are wary of extending invitations to other powers, like China (as suggested by Japanese prime minister Obuchi before Okinawa), because, once invited, they cannot be ‘un-invited’ without giving offence. There is no agreement among the heads to admit other countries to summit membership.<sup>v</sup>

*Agenda and Use of Time.* The addition of political to economic issues at the summit, from the early 1980s, together with new topics provoked by the end of the Cold War, produced severe overloading of the agenda. A campaign led by Major in 1992-3, to shorten both agenda and documentation and to cut down on ceremonial, had only short-lived effect. In 1998 Blair tried again, proposing an economic agenda of only three items – employment, crime and debt relief – for Birmingham 1998, though new financial architecture was added in response to the Asian crisis. A short agenda at a heads-only summit (see below) allowed the documents issued to be pruned severely.<sup>vi</sup> Since then both agenda and documents have got longer again, especially at Okinawa 2000, for reasons explained below, though Genoa 2001 may reverse the trend.

*Participation.* Ever since 1975, the heads had been flanked at the summits by their foreign and finance ministers. This was originally on American insistence, though it also helped those with coalition governments, like Germany. By the 1990s, however, the heads and their ministers were meeting at the summit in separate groups, with only rare plenaries. In 1998 Blair proposed to separate the flanking ministers in time

as well as space. Only the heads came to Birmingham 1998, with foreign and finance ministers meeting a few days earlier. ‘Heads-only summits’ have now become established and are clearly welcome to the heads themselves.

The establishment of heads-only summits is the fundamental reform of the summit format of the last decade. But its full significance is more complex than it appears. At first sight, meeting alone gives the heads greater freedom to choose their own agenda and develop their own ideas. But this freedom is constrained by other trends in summit decision-making, especially the growth of separate ministerial groups and the involvement of non-state actors in the G7/G8 process. These will be analysed later in this paper.

### *The Heads and Summit Content*

*Innovation in Agenda-Setting.* Each G7 country hosts the summit in turn, in a predictable sequence.<sup>vii</sup> While many topics are carried over from previous summits, the host has the ability to propose as innovative an agenda as the others can accept. This is the point at which the host has most influence over the proceedings and most heads take the opportunity to intervene personally, by writing to, telephoning or visiting their peers.

Here are some dominant themes for the summits since Naples 1994 – the last summit held in Italy:

- For Halifax 1995, Canadian prime minister Chretien proposed reform of the international monetary system.
- For Lyon 1996, French president Chirac proposed development and invited the heads of the IMF, World Bank, WTO and UN to the summit.
- For Denver 1997, Clinton proposed help for Africa.
- For Birmingham 1998, Blair proposed ‘employability’ – agreeing the topic bilaterally with Clinton even before Denver.
- For Cologne 1999, German chancellor Schroeder proposed debt relief for poor countries, reversing the policy of his predecessor Kohl. Under the pressure of events in Kosovo he added conflict prevention – with strong Italian support.

- For Okinawa 2000, Obuchi proposed information technology (IT) and the ‘digital divide’.
- For Genoa this year Italian prime minister Amato proposed world poverty – ‘beyond debt relief’ – and conflict prevention again; his successor Berlusconi has wisely endorsed this choice.

Some of the items on the list are recurrent summit items, but others, like Africa, IT and conflict prevention, are wholly new. This shows how different leaders have added new ideas to the summit agenda – themselves increasing the overload about which they complain.

*Innovation at the Summit Itself.* Innovation by a G8 head at the summit may be substantive or procedural, but substantive innovations are rare. Ideas for brand new policies seldom prevail, if they have not been filtered through the preparatory process.<sup>viii</sup> So Clinton was blocked by the Europeans at Naples 1994 when he proposed without warning a new round of trade negotiations. Back at the Paris summit of 1989, Italian prime minister Fanfani urged that the summit should act to avert the risk of conflict in Yugoslavia. But in their excitement about the fall of communism in Central Europe, none of his colleagues would listen – if only they had!

New procedural proposals launched at the summit itself are both more frequent and likely to succeed. Clinton made his mark at Tokyo III 1993, his first summit, by suggesting a special meeting of G7 employment ministers. (Chirac did the same at *his* first summit, Halifax 1995). Yeltsin produced a whole range of proposals for G8 meetings in Moscow, on nuclear safety and energy, to show that Russia was really part of the summit process. These procedural proposals, whatever their merits, also tend to expand the summit’s agenda and its apparatus.

Innovation also includes the personal crusades of certain summit heads, often going beyond the advice of their officials. The most conspicuous of these was Kohl’s insistence on getting environmental and nuclear safety issues onto the agenda, in addition to launching, as host, a meeting of G7 environment ministers before Munich 1992.<sup>ix</sup>

*Political Reflexes.* Another personal contribution from the heads comes when their political instincts lead them to pick out certain issues or go against what their officials have prepared. The heads are often moved to react to sudden crises happening just before a summit. For example, a terrorist attack on US servicemen in Saudi Arabia just before Lyon 1996 meant that Clinton persuaded his colleagues to convert material prepared on violent crime into a sharp condemnation of terrorism.

On other occasions the heads' political sense tells them that the conclusions prepared for the summit are not adequate, so that they do not accept them. Halifax 1995 had made detailed preparations on reform of the IMF, rather less on the UN. But the heads themselves decided that the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN that year was an opportunity not to be missed, so that they greatly expanded their conclusions. At Denver 1997 the heads were not satisfied with the progress being made on trans-border crime, which worried their electorates. They sought to accelerate G7 work in this area, making crime a major theme for Birmingham the next year. These interventions by the heads against the grain of the preparations are different from deals struck on the basis of the preparatory work, which are discussed in the next section.

*Domestic Motivation.* As these examples show, often the leaders make personal use of the summit to respond to domestic pressures or to advance their domestic agenda. Kohl's concern with the environment reflected strong public interest in this subject in Germany. Blair in 1998 and Schroeder in 1999 were newly elected left-of-centre leaders, who used the summit to advance their own domestic objectives in employment and social protection. Successive Italian prime ministers have promoted conflict prevention because of the domestic disruption caused by the turmoil across the Adriatic, especially by flows of refugees. These political objectives and pressures, of course, do not always have positive effects. French president Mitterrand felt obliged to hold up progress on concluding the Uruguay Round at Munich 1992, for fear that would upset the farming vote before the referendum in France on the Maastricht treaty.

### *The Heads and Summit Follow-up*

Once the summit is over, the leaders rarely intervene to ensure its conclusions are carried out. Late in 1991 and 1992 there was much telephoning between G7 leaders in a vain attempt to conclude the Uruguay Round by the end of the year, as they had promised at the London III and Munich summits. In October 1998, Blair sounded his colleagues on whether the worsening monetary crisis called for an extraordinary summit – but they were content just to issue a statement encouraging their finance ministers. But these personal interventions by the leaders are exceptional.<sup>x</sup>

The position is quite different as regards communicating the summit outcome to the media. All the heads take pains to convey their own views to their national press corps, who have followed them to the summit site. The leaders want to make a good impression back home, which often leads them to stress their personal victories, rather than the agreed results achieved at the summit. Comparing national accounts reveals inconsistencies, which can focus public attention on points of difference rather than agreement.

### *Summary of the Contribution of the Heads*

The main personal contribution of the heads of government to decision-making at the G7/G8 summit, independent of their officials, can be summarised thus:

- A strong attachment to simplicity of process, recently advanced by the launch of ‘heads-only’ summit, though some of their other practices conflict with this;
- Innovation by the summit host in agenda setting and by all leaders at the summit, though more often in procedure than content;
- Political reflexes, triggered by sudden crises or a sense that the preparations are inadequate, and often reflecting domestic pressures or objectives;
- Rare involvement in implementation, but close attention to media treatment of the summit, which can stress differences more than agreement.

The prospect of meeting their peers at the top table thus concentrates the minds of the leaders, especially where this international encounter can also advance their domestic agenda.<sup>xi</sup>



## **B. The Contribution of the Supporting Apparatus**

The preparation of the summit is largely in the hands of the supporting G7 or G8 apparatus. Even what happens at the summit itself usually owes more to the preparatory process than to the personal intervention of the heads. This section therefore looks at what supporting G7/G8 bureaucrats and ministers do, both on their own and in combination with the heads of government.

### *The Supporting Players*

*The Sherpas.* Traditionally, summit preparations have been in the hands of a small team of bureaucrats, led by the sherpas, who are chosen either for their personal closeness to the head or their seniority in their parent department.<sup>xii</sup> The sherpas are supported by two ‘sous-sherpas’, one each from the finance and foreign ministries, to work on the main summit agenda, and by the ‘political directors’ from foreign ministries, to prepare foreign policy subjects. While originally the entire group would meet together, during the 1990s the sherpas, each set of sous-sherpas, and the political directors took to meeting separately, to cover the growing agenda. Plenary meetings of the full team have become rare. In addition, groups of specialist officials have grown up to deal with recurrent summit themes, such as terrorism or disarmament.

Summit preparations are concentrated in several meetings each spring, to select the agenda and start drafting the necessary documents. In many ways the dynamics of summit meetings are reproduced at sherpa level. At these small gatherings, discussion is frank, with plenty of personal interaction.<sup>xiii</sup> The sherpas get to know each other well, they understand each others’ domestic background and they develop a sense of solidarity and shared responsibility. The sherpas become adept both at seeing what arguments would prove convincing, against their colleagues’ domestic backgrounds, and at picking up ideas from the others which they can use to good effect back home.<sup>xiv</sup>

*The Other Ministers.* At the outset G7 foreign and finance ministers attended the summit as supporting the heads. But each group has steadily asserted its independence. During the 1980s the secretive G5 was absorbed into the public G7 finance ministers, while G7 foreign ministers began meeting on their own on the margin of the UN General Assembly. Since Birmingham 1998, both groups meet just before the summit, but no longer attend it. They also meet at other times: G7 finance ministers on the margins of IMF meetings; G8 foreign ministers as issues require it. For example, the foreign ministers held a special meeting on conflict prevention in December 1999, to carry out a remit from the Cologne summit.

Meanwhile, other ministers became associated with the summit in the 1990s, largely thanks to personal initiatives by the heads themselves. There are now regular or periodic meetings of environment ministers (promoted by Kohl), employment ministers (backed by Clinton, Chirac and Blair), energy ministers (started by Yeltsin), interior and justice ministers (focused on terrorism and crime) and education ministers (first in 2000, thanks to Schroeder). These ministers meet not only to prepare for summits and carry out instructions from the heads, but also to pursue their own independent agenda. Most of these groups include the Russians, though finance ministers remain as G7 only. Each has its own apparatus of supporting officials.<sup>xv</sup>

Once the summit began meeting as heads only, these separate ministerial groups no longer felt bound to preserve the strict G7 or G8 format. G8 Foreign ministers have invited selected other countries to join them for meetings focused on specific problems – for example, on Balkan stability in June 1999, in response to the Kosovo crisis. The G7 finance ministers have created a new permanent grouping, the G20, linked to monetary reform in the IMF, which includes major developing countries active in the system.<sup>xvi</sup>

The proliferation of these ministerial groups counter-balances the effect of the heads meeting alone at the summit and introduces a certain tension. The heads have to decide whether to exercise their own freedom, at the cost of allowing these other groups to operate independently too, or to try to keep control over an ever-expanding pyramid of activity.

### *Summit Preparations*

*Agenda-Setting.* This is the task for the first sherpa meeting of the year. The host head of government, as shown earlier, focuses on new ideas to make that year's summit distinctive. The sherpas, on the other hand, have to wrestle with the on-going summit agenda, of items started but not completed in earlier years. This agenda is always under pressure.<sup>xvii</sup> The difficult issues that come up to the heads often need recurrent summit treatment, like international trade or debt relief for poor countries. While most items can be handed on to other established organisations for follow-up (see below), sometimes the institutions are inadequate, so that the G7/G8 remains responsible for them.

The innovative ideas of earlier years, such as employment or information technology, become recurrent items later. After Blair's reforms of 1998, which were meant to check this inflation of the agenda, the next two summits kept on adding new items – education, conflict prevention, aging, information technology, infectious diseases – without taking old ones off. For Genoa in 2001, the Italians have rightly sought to return to a limited, three-part agenda of poverty reduction, environment and conflict prevention. But, in general, the hardest part of agenda-setting for the sherpas is deciding what to leave out.

*Summit Endorsement – Work in Progress.* Endorsement takes up the largest and the easiest part of the summit agenda and documentation. It consists of the heads putting their authority behind work that is going on elsewhere. Often this will be activity that has been generated by earlier summits, so that the heads give their blessing to work in progress. In other cases G8 governments find it useful to have the endorsement of their peers for policies they have decided to adopt already, since this can be useful in overcoming domestic opposition.

This part of the summit agenda, however, is most subject to inflation. There is a strong incentive for G8 governments to expand the area of their policies carrying summit endorsement. But the wider this endorsement is given, the more its value becomes diluted. The move to heads-only summits was intended to allow more

issues to be pushed down to other ministers and this is happening, to some extent. But once the heads have lent their authority to a particular subject, they are often reluctant to abandon it, for fear others should conclude that they have ceased to care about it.

*Stimulating Agreement at Lower Levels.* A more demanding technique is where summit discussion, or even the prospect of it, is used to resolve differences between G7 or G8 members which persist at lower levels and may prevent agreement in wider international contexts. A good example is seen in the international financial architecture agreed after the Asian crisis. The essential work on this was done by the G7 finance ministers and their deputies. On some issues there were deep divisions between them, but the approach of the summits at Birmingham in 1998 and Cologne in 1999 gave them an incentive to resolve these differences. The heads gave their authority to what their finance ministers had agreed, without adding anything of their own. The work done so far in conflict prevention also illustrates this well. After the initial impulse from the heads at Cologne, the foreign ministers worked up a detailed programme at their meetings in Berlin in December 1999 and Miyazaki in July 2000. The imminence of the Okinawa summit, a week after the Miyazaki meeting, concentrated their minds, so that heads only needed to endorse what the foreign ministers had done, without having to discuss it themselves.

A more controversial example is seen in the summits' involvement in the GATT Uruguay Round negotiations. At three summits - Houston 1990, London III 1991 and Munich 1992 - the heads undertook to complete the round by the end of the year, but because of differences on agriculture they always failed to meet their own deadline. For Tokyo III 1993, however, the preparations called for the G7 trade ministers to meet as the 'Quad' just before the summit itself.<sup>xviii</sup> The imminence of the summit encouraged the trade ministers to reach agreements that opened the way for the Uruguay Round's final completion in December 1993.

*Stimulating Agreement at the Summit Itself.* The two techniques described so far cover most of the summit content and often they will produce the most important evidence of G7/G8 cooperation. But the heads also play a more direct role. In some cases they have to engage their own authority to give the necessary impetus to a wide-

ranging or innovative programme. The work on the digital divide at Okinawa 2000 is one example of this; the decisions on action against infectious diseases expected from Genoa are another. In other cases agreement can only be reached through the intervention of the heads themselves. This applied to the peace arrangement for Kosovo in 1999. Detailed preparations had been made, but everything hinged on the position of Yeltsin, which did not become clear until he reached the Cologne summit in person.

In yet other cases the heads are able to reach agreements which are not attainable at lower levels. Debt relief for low-income countries provides successive examples of this technique throughout the 1990s. At London III 1991, Naples 1994, Lyon 1996 and Cologne 1999, the heads succeeded in advancing agreement on this subject further than their finance ministers had taken it. They tried hard to do so at Birmingham 1998 and Okinawa 2000 as well, but did not succeed. Debt relief is thus one area where the summit has become identified as the place where things happen, so that it attracted huge demonstrations to Birmingham and Cologne.

Such agreements exploit the heads' wish for some achievements of their own. They are not happy when everything at the summit has been 'pre-cooked'. The sherpas try to provide some scope for the heads to go beyond what has been prepared for them – though whether they will do this on conflict prevention for Genoa is not clear. Without this, the heads will be tempted to take their own unprepared initiatives – as described earlier. But this strategy does not always work – and once discord is registered at the summit it may be harder to find agreement elsewhere. This is shown by the summits' treatment of environmental issues both before and after the UN Conference on Environment and Development at Rio in 1992. The early summits, from Paris 1989 to London III 1991, were able to stimulate much new thinking on the environment and to feed ideas into the preparations for Rio. However, as discussion moved from broad ideas to specific commitments, it became harder to overcome differences between the United States and Europe. When the summits took up the environment again, at Denver 1997 and Okinawa 2000, in advance of climate change meetings at Kyoto and The Hague, raising the issue to head of government level did not resolve the disagreements – nor is it likely to do so at Genoa.

*Domestic Motivation.* When the heads are ready to go a bit further at the summit than their officials or ministers, that again usually reflects their judgement of the balance of domestic and international advantage in reaching agreement. Yeltsin knew that the Kosovo settlement was unpopular in Russia, but he did not want to alienate the support of the G7. Schroeder, Blair and their predecessors were aware of strong public interest in debt relief, mobilised by the Jubilee 2000 Campaign. But these domestic political considerations can work in the wrong direction. On climate change and biodiversity the strongest domestic pressures in Europe come mainly from consumer groups and public opinion, while in North America they come from producers and business interests. So agreement on environmental issues may actually be harder to reach at the summit than lower down.

### *Summit Follow-Up*

In contrast to agenda-setting and summit preparation, the sherpas play little part in summit follow-up. The G7 and G8 ministerial groups, in contrast, have a growing role in the implementation of summit conclusions. They have much greater flexibility than the summit itself, in the choice of when they meet and whether they involve other countries. But by far the largest responsibility for summit follow-up, however, still rests with wider international institutions. The contribution of these outside bodies is considered in the next section of this paper.

### *Summary of the Contribution of the Supporting Apparatus*

The contribution of the supporting apparatus to the summit, whether working on its own or together with the heads, can be summarised as follows:

- The traditional sherpa network has been supplemented in the 1990s by the growth of semi-independent G7 or G8 ministerial groups;
- In agenda-setting, the hardest task for the sherpas is to decide how to leave things out, so as to keep the agenda under control;
- Summit endorsement of existing policies is valuable in giving the authority of the heads, but this becomes devalued if used too much;

- The prospect of summit discussion can stimulate agreement at lower levels, without a direct contribution from the heads being necessary;
- The sherpas try to take advantage of the heads' desire to achieve something of their own, so as to advance agreement at the summits beyond the preparations – but this does not always work;
- Sherpas take little part in follow-up; supporting ministers do rather more, but most is done in wider institutions.

The imminence of the summit concentrates the minds of those involved in the preparations, whether these are the sherpa team or the groups of G7 and G8 ministers, and often this is enough to produce agreement. But the question is whether the heads-only summits can still have this concentrating effect in the more dispersed G7/G8 system.

### **C. The Contribution of Other Actors**

During the 1970s and 1980s, summit preparations were held tightly by the sherpas. Summit follow-up was entrusted to other institutions, without much direct involvement by the G7. During the 1990s, however, the self-contained character of the summitry began to loosen up and this process has accelerated rapidly from 2000. This looks like a direct consequence of the heads meeting on their own. Since the summits have detached themselves from their own ministerial apparatus, this gives them greater scope to form links with outside bodies, both other governments and non-state groups. This also reflects a perception by the heads of government of their responsibility to explain policy decisions to their peoples and to reassure them about the impact of globalisation. These changes so far affect preparation and follow-up, but not the summit itself. For example, Chirac's invitation to the heads of institutions to attend the Lyon 1996 summit has not been repeated.

*Contribution to Summit Preparation.*

For many years, the G7 governments kept summit preparation firmly in their own hands. Other governments had little chance to influence the process directly, except for other member states of the European Community, who were consulted to some degree by the Commission and Presidency. The OECD also held its annual ministerial meeting a few weeks before the summit, so that the non-G7 members could make their views known. As for non-government influences, these hardly went beyond visits to the host head of government by business and trade union delegations under OECD auspices. But this hermetic character of the preparations is being eroded rapidly.

*International Institutions and Other Governments.* The growing involvement of supporting ministers in the preparatory process has enabled other international institutions to be involved. G7 and G8 ministers often invite senior staff members from these institutions to join them. The supporting ministerial groups also allow other governments to become involved, as they are not limited to a strict G7/G8 format. A more radical move was made before Okinawa 2000, when most of the G8 leaders met a group of heads of government from developing countries in Tokyo on their way to the summit.<sup>xix</sup> A similar meeting is envisaged before Genoa 2001, but it will remain distinct from the summit itself.

*Private Business and Non-Governmental Organisations.* In 2000, the Japanese prepared the treatment of IT and the digital divide at the summit by involving a range of major multinational companies. They organised a special conference shortly before Okinawa and incorporated most of its findings in the summit's own report. The involvement of NGOs took off at Birmingham 1998, where the Jubilee 2000 Campaign organised a march of 50,000 people calling for debt cancellation. Since then, the host head of government has always met a delegation of NGOs present at the summit. In 2000 the Japanese not only provided an NGO centre at Okinawa, but also involved NGO groups in consultations with their sherpa team. These consultations have been conducted much more systematically by the Italians in 2001, for example involving groups active in conflict prevention like 'International Alert'.<sup>xx</sup>



*Contribution to Summit Follow-Up*

*International Institutions.* In contrast to the preparations, summit follow-up has relied on other actors from the outset. The summits of the 1970s and 1980s largely delegated the responsibility for implementing their economic decisions to bodies like the OECD, the IMF and World Bank and the GATT. During this time the summit took a detached attitude to these institutions, handing down its decisions as *faits accomplis* and expecting them to be adopted without further debate. But this approach would no longer work in the 1990s, as more countries became active in the international system and the G7 became less dominant.

When the G7 members conducted their review of international institutions, begun at Naples 1994 and continued till Denver 1997, they realised that they would have to use more tact and persuasion to get their ideas for reform accepted by the wider membership. Meanwhile, the expanding agenda has taken the summit deeper into unfamiliar policy areas. Its links have spread beyond economic bodies to various organs of the United Nations, as well as security institutions like the OSCE. In some subjects the summit has found the existing institutions to be inadequate, for example in crime and money–laundering. This has been a factor behind the creation of G7 and G8 ministerial groups, such as the interior and justice ministers.<sup>xxi</sup>

*Business and NGOs.* Both private business and NGOs started to become involved in summit follow-up during the 1990s. An initial involvement of private business came with the ‘Global Information Society’ conferences launched from Naples 1994, to promote the wider diffusion of information technology, but these ran out of steam.<sup>xxii</sup> The renewed interest in IT at Okinawa 2000 has led to the creation of the ‘dot force’ to recommend ways to overcome the digital divide, with strong participation from business and also from NGOs. Business and NGOs are involved in two other programmes agreed at Okinawa: the campaign against infectious diseases in poor countries; and the task force on renewable energy. Their participation has the merit of tapping additional sources of expertise and financial support, even though these new follow-up structures may be harder to integrate into the existing framework of international institutions. This mixed responsibility for follow-up will also apply to the fund to fight infectious diseases expected to be launched at Genoa 2001. In

addition, recent summits have called for the involvement of ‘civil society’ in the wider follow-up to their recommendations on debt relief and on trade.

### *Summary of the Contribution of Other Actors*

The contribution of other actors to summit decision-making can be summarised as follows:

- The formally hermetic system of summit preparation now gives rather more access to other governments and international institutions, as well as to business and NGOs.
- International institutions have always been entrusted with summit follow-up, but the G8 now treats them more persuasively and systematically;
- There are problems however, when the institutions are inadequate; involving business and NGOs can compensate for this, but at the risk of overloading the summit again.

In the early years, it was enough for the summits to make recommendations for these to concentrate the minds of others. But power is now much more dispersed, both among states and among other actors in the system. So other players are increasingly involved and contribute to the results – again at the cost of more dispersed decision-making in the G7/G8 system.

### **Conclusions**

This paper has analysed the decision-making methods of the G7/G8 system, especially of the summits, as they have developed over the last decade. The main findings have been summarised at intervals earlier in the paper. It remains to establish how the different strands interact with one another.

The G7/G8 summit meetings, as noted at the outset, are a device to ‘concentrate minds’ on finding cooperative solutions to intractable problems where international and domestic pressures interact. They exercise a strong attraction not only on the G7/G8 leaders, but on heads of government worldwide. This is shown by the great increase in international summit meetings in the 1990s, both in limited groups like the

European Council and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and on a wider scale, like the Summit of the Americas and the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The original, tightly-knit methods of decision making served the G7 summit well in its earlier years. But they are no longer an adequate response to the pressures of globalisation, which have brought many new subjects onto the summit agenda and many new actors, both state and non-state, onto the international stage. After many years when the summit became overloaded, the G7/G8 leaders have responded by cutting loose from their governmental apparatus and meeting on their own.

This move gives the heads new freedom of action, which they greatly welcome. But it also confronts them with new and difficult decisions. For example:-

- Separating the supporting apparatus from the summit opens new opportunities for the G7/G8 ministerial groups which have developed during the 1990s. They can help to prepare and follow up the summit, but they can also pursue their own agenda. Will the summits remain detached and allow this to develop? Or will they try to keep control of the G7/G8 system, on the grounds that only the link with the summit effectively concentrates the mind?
- Meeting alone also enables the heads to establish links with wider networks, for example of non-G8 governments, private business and civil society. With the advance of globalisation, these have become essential contributors to decision-making, in the preparations and especially in follow-up. Their involvement also helps to make the G7/G8 process more transparent. But will this dispersion of activity make it harder to concentrate minds in the inter-governmental institutions, on which the summit still largely relies?

There are no definitive answers to these questions yet. So far, each summit since Birmingham 1998 has found its own equilibrium. After Birmingham sought to give the heads the freedom of a short agenda, Cologne and Okinawa allowed the agenda and the documentation to expand again. Genoa 2001 may return to the spirit of Birmingham in this respect. Okinawa made major moves towards admitting outside players. Genoa will continue this trend, which would be difficult to reverse. This

increases transparency, but may make it harder to strike deals at the summit or to ensure that summit recommendations are in fact carried out.

Finally, what conclusions can be drawn about the subject of this conference: 'Promoting Conflict Prevention and Human Security: What Can the G8 Do?' From this analysis of decision making, the following sequence emerges:

1. Conflict prevention is firmly on the summit agenda. It arrived at Cologne in 1999 and the Italian chair has ensured its prominence for Genoa.
2. Two years of preparatory work have already been carried out by the G8 foreign ministers, through their meetings at Berlin in 1999 and Miyazaki in 2000, endorsed by the Okinawa summit.
3. NGOs with ideas to contribute, like International Alert, have been involved in this year's preparations.
4. Sherpas and Political Directors will by now have concentrated their minds: to obtain summit endorsement, where needed, for uncontroversial work in progress; and to encourage foreign ministers to reach maximum agreement in Rome this week, to which the heads can give their authority at Genoa.
5. At Genoa itself, the sherpas may have provided scope for the heads to take agreement further than their foreign ministers could. Alternatively the heads, following their political reflexes, may themselves decide on a different outcome from what their advisers recommend.
6. As a leading summit topic, which arouses strong public concern, the results on conflict prevention should feature prominently in the heads' briefing of the media.
7. Finally, whatever is agreed will be followed up: partly, no doubt, by the foreign ministers; but mainly in the United Nations and the wider international and regional bodies concerned with security and conflict resolution.

Next year the cycle will start again. It will be for the Canadian hosts to decide what place conflict prevention should have on the agenda for the summit of 2002, against all the other subjects competing for attention.

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> Nearly all the examples of decision-making in the main body of this paper are taken from Bayne 2000, Chapters 5, 8 and 10.

<sup>ii</sup> This view was held strongly by French president Giscard d'Estaing and German chancellor Schmidt; see Putnam and Bayne 1987, pp. 32-34.

<sup>iii</sup> For an account of the development of the sherpa process, see Putnam and Bayne 1987, pp. 48-61.

<sup>iv</sup> Quoted in Putnam and Bayne 1987, p. 44.

<sup>v</sup> For an analysis of G8 relations with China, see Kirton 2000b.

<sup>vi</sup> The communiqué issued after Tokyo III 1993 was down to six pages. At Denver 1997 the heads issued a total of 29 pages of documents. This was cut back by half at Birmingham 1998.

<sup>vii</sup> The order is: France, US, UK, Germany, Japan, Italy and Canada. There is still debate on whether Russia can host its first summit in 2003, at the end of the current cycle.

<sup>viii</sup> The classic example of a new policy introduced without preparation at the summit is the agreement on hijacking from Bonn I 1978 – see Putnam and Bayne 1987, p. 87. But even at early summits such initiatives were uncommon.

<sup>ix</sup> Kohl's crusade goes well back into the 1980s. He tried to hold a G7 environment ministers meeting before Bonn II 1985, but the French declined to come. His political reflexes led him to propose a statement from Tokyo II 1986 on the Chernobyl nuclear accident, which had happened just before the summit. See Putnam and Bayne 1987, pp. 202-3 and 213-4.

<sup>x</sup> Sometimes the follow-up includes a further summit meeting of the G8 and others, such as the Moscow nuclear safety summit of early 1996 and the Sarajevo summit of July 1999 on Balkan reconstruction.

<sup>xi</sup> This process has been well analysed by Professor Robert Putnam in his model of 'two-level games', which he developed from his observation of the Bonn I summit of 1978. See Putnam 1988 and Putnam and Henning 1989.

<sup>xii</sup> There were some changes in national practice during the 1990s. Under presidents Reagan and Bush I, the US sherpa had been a senior State Department figure, but Clinton chose his sherpas from his White House staff and so has his successor Bush II. Chancellors Schmidt and Kohl had always made the State Secretary at the finance ministry the German sherpa, but Schroeder moved the post to his Chancellery.

<sup>xiii</sup> As with the summit itself, the arrival of the Russians has introduced rather more formality.

<sup>xiv</sup> This again shows Putnam's two-level game model at work - see Putnam 1988 and Putnam and Henning 1989, as in note xi above.

<sup>xv</sup> For an analysis of this development, see Hajnal 1999, pp.35-44.

<sup>xvi</sup> See Kirton 2000a for an account of the G20 and its role.

<sup>xvii</sup> The growth of 'iteration' at the summits is documented in Bayne 2000, pp. 200-208.

<sup>xviii</sup> The Quadrilateral or 'Quad', composed of the trade ministers of the US, Japan and Canada and the responsible European Commissioner, had been founded at the Ottawa summit of 1981, though its links with the G7 process had become tenuous. See Putnam and Bayne 1987, p. 131.

<sup>xix</sup> This meeting was arranged without difficulty, in contrast to the resistance by the G7 heads to the proposal from Mitterrand for an encounter with other leaders before the Paris Arch summit of 1989. See Bayne 2000, p. 75, n. 5 and Attali 1995.

<sup>xx</sup> NGOs also influence national preparations. Some of the environmental measures agreed at Okinawa, such as the task-force for renewable energy and the provisions on illegal logging, were British initiatives worked out in cooperation with NGOs.

<sup>xxi</sup> One early example of this trend is the Financial Action Task Force against money-laundering, founded at the Paris 1989 summit – see Bayne 2000, p. 66.

<sup>xxii</sup> For details, see Hajnal 1999, pp. 38-39.