

17. The Campaign in Afghanistan and Beyond

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Hello, I'm John Kirton, Director of the G8 Research Group at the University of Toronto and your lead instructor for G8 Online 2002.

In this session, "The Campaign in Afghanistan and Beyond," we explore the G8's role in regional security by examining its performance in the anti-terrorism war in Afghanistan over the past year.

This story does have a longer history, for the G8 has been concerned with the actions of the Taliban regime for many years. Partly because of this earlier attention, the G8 sprang into action against Afghanistan immediately after the Taliban-supported al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on North America took place on September 11, 2001. But just how effective have this G8 attention and action been?

The **false new consensus** model would suggest that the distant sources of transnational terrorism are difficult to extinguish. Thus G8 leaders, in the face of this clear fact and with vivid memories of the earlier military defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, would quickly conclude that there was little they could and thus should do. But this argument is refuted empirically both by the earlier attention that the G8 devoted to Afghanistan and by the swift, strong and forceful G8 response to the September 11 attacks.

The **American leadership** model would predict that America, having been attacked at home for the first time in over a century, would use the G8 to round up otherwise reluctant allies to assist in America's war in Afghanistan. This argument is consistent with the strong support that Prime Minister Tony Blair's Britain and Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's Canada have given the United States, including sending combat troops as part of the American-led military campaign in Afghanistan. But from the start it was Italy, Russia and Canada, rather

than the United States, that urged that the G8 be mobilized to devise a collective response. And all G8 members spontaneously offered strong support to an affected America, and did so well beyond their earlier limits, rather than bargaining with America to produce a compromise result.

The model of **democratic institutionalism** does accurately point to how the G8 leaders' ongoing attention to Afghanistan and their foreign ministers' intense work over Kosovo and conflict prevention in 1999 made a collective G8 action easier. It can even help explain why America has often acted alone, rather than through and with the G8, by pointing to how few regular meetings G8 foreign ministers have scheduled compared to their finance minister colleagues. But it cannot account for the limited role played by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on this occasion or the delay of the United Nations' annual meeting and cancellation of the regular meeting of **International Monetary Fund** (IMF) in the autumn of 2001.

The **concert equality** model again has much to recommend it, explaining the G8's role in the anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan. The September 11th attacks on the United States brutally and tragically showed how the G8's most powerful member was also its most vulnerable. The attacks left the G8's weakest member — Canada — as the only G8 member to have not yet experienced a terrorist attack on its own soil. The G8's common democratic values help explain its continuing collective concern with the Taliban's highly repressive form of domestic governance, and Russia's enthusiastic support for G8 solidarity and action when the September 11th attacks came. It also is consistent with the striking fact that since September 11th mass public opinion in

all G8 countries has given majority support to the U.S.-led military action, while in most countries outside it has not. The concert's common commitment to modern democratic values and their common vulnerability to outside assaults has gone beyond leaders at the top to embrace the majority of their citizens below.

A. The G8's Response to September 11th

The G8's concern with Afghanistan dates back as far as the Soviet invasion of the country at the start of the 1980s and the new cold war that was unleashed by that attack. In the post-cold war period, G8 attention shifted to the brutal treatment that Afghanistan's Taliban regime visited upon its own citizens, particularly women and the young. Indeed, in the year before the September 11th attack, G8 environment ministers at their March 2001 meeting condemned the Taliban's destruction of the great Buddha statues in Afghanistan as an assault on the values of cultural diversity and religious tolerance that the G8 hold dear.

The immediate reaction of most G8 members to the September 11th terrorist attacks on North America was to mobilize the G8 forum to design and deliver a collective response. The day after the attacks, Canada's Jean Chrétien, along with Italian chair Silvio Berlusconi and Russia's Vladimir Putin, publicly called for the G8 to be used to define a collective approach. The G8 foreign ministers meeting, held on the eve of the United Nations General Assembly's delayed opening in New York on November 11, 2001, was devoted entirely to the war against terrorism and developments in the Middle East. With the U.S. and alliance forces having just reached the outskirts of Kabul, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell shared information about the latest developments freely with his G8 colleagues. The group discussed the question of how to put Bin Laden on trial should he be captured. At the end of December, G8 foreign ministers again sprung into visible action, issuing under Russian

leadership a collective statement calling on India and Pakistan to move back from the brink of starting a terrorist-incited war.

Among the G8 members, Canada was second only to Britain in its early dispatch of naval, air and ground forces to assist the U.S. coalition in Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf. Canada extended its contribution in December with the deployment of long-range patrol aircraft. It did so again in January when it sent combat ground troops into the dangerous Kandahar front. The calculus behind Canada's investment was well captured in then foreign minister John Manley's memorable phrase, "You can't sit at the G8 table and go to the washroom when the cheque comes." Canadians themselves were evenly divided on whether the September 11 assaults were an attack on America alone or on America and its allies, including Canada. However, Canadians led citizens of the G8, outside the United States, in their support for the U.S.-led military campaign in Afghanistan. Canadians were also in the top tier of those supporting the use of their own armed forces in the campaign.

As the military campaign in Afghanistan unfolded, all G8 members contributed in the most effective ways they could. For example, Japan took the lead in mobilizing money to reconstruct Afghanistan after the Taliban regime was driven out. But it also dispatched its naval forces, for the first time, as far afield as the Indian Ocean to lend a hand. Canada adjusted its Kananaskis agenda to allow the campaign against terrorism a full place. It similarly adjusted its conflict prevention agenda from the program agreed to at the Rome meeting of the G8 foreign ministers last summer to deal with preventing a resumption of conflict in Afghanistan. And Britain's Tony Blair toured Africa to make the case that a successful campaign against terrorism required reducing poverty in potential African breeding grounds and bases as an integral part.

B. The Kananaskis G8's Afghanistan Agenda and Approach

At Kananaskis itself, and at the G8 foreign ministers meeting just before it in Whistler, British Columbia, the leaders and foreign ministers will need to assess the next stage of the campaign, especially with the fate of al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden still unknown. They will also need to discuss whether military intervention beyond Afghanistan is necessary and, if so, where and when. Above all, they will need to address the challenge of how to build a stable, ultimately democratic, multicultural state in post-Taliban Afghanistan. This challenge is a most ambitious one. But the G8's work in recent years in Kosovo and the Balkans suggests G8 members have the predominant capabilities, sense of common purpose, commitment and political skills to meet the need.

References

To come

Further Readings

To come

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways, if any, are Canadian and other G8 military contributions necessary to the success of the U.S.-led military operation in Afghanistan?
2. Although the G8 “concerned” itself with events in Afghanistan prior to the September 11 attacks, it made little to no active effort to promote democracy or ensure human rights were respected. Should the G8 have played a proactive role in Afghanistan? Should it in other countries known to breed terrorism? How?
3. Does the G8 need to focus its agenda on the anti-terrorism campaign, or are the finance and foreign ministers’ meetings a sufficient forum to generate policy? Why or why not?
4. Consider the low level of support among non-G8 members for the U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan. How accountable is the G8 to non-member countries and their citizens? What guidance should they seek? From which countries, and why?
5. Is the G8 the appropriate forum for determining and carrying out a trial of Osama Bin Laden, should he be captured? How might a G8-generated trial differ from other trials of war criminals and abusers of human rights?
2. When did the former Soviet Union invade Afghanistan?
 - a. December 1980
 - b. March 1982
 - c. June 1984
 - d. November 1985
3. The day after the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, which G8 leader did not call for the G8 to be the dominant political vehicle to determine a response?
 - a. Jean Chrétien
 - b. George W. Bush
 - c. Silvio Berlusconi
 - d. Vladimir Putin
4. Which of the following was not a G8 member’s contribution to the war on terrorism following the September 11 attacks?
 - a. Japan contributed funds to reconstruct Afghanistan after the Taliban was defeated.
 - b. Canada changed the agenda of the Kananaskis Summit to include the campaign against terrorism.
 - c. Britain’s Tony Blair toured Africa to make the case that the campaign against terrorism also required reducing poverty in Africa.
 - d. Italy sent diplomats to counsel the new Afghanistan co-operative government.
5. Prior to the September 11th attacks, the G8 had already publicly condemned which action of Afghanistan’s Taliban government?
 - a. the destruction of the Buddha statues
 - b. co-operative nuclear testing program with Pakistan
 - c. the unregulated bioengineering industry
 - d. the refusal to sit on the Integrated Middle Eastern Anti-terrorism Task Force

Quiz

1. Which G8 country has never experienced a terrorist attack on its own soil?
 - a. Russia
 - b. France
 - c. Canada
 - d. Japan