

PREFACE

Since its first meeting in 1975 the Seven Power Summit has emerged as a central instrument of international economic policy coordination for the world's most powerful industrialized countries. Despite its increasing importance to the overall structure and functioning of the contemporary international political economy, however, little scholarly attention has been devoted to the study of the significance of this relatively new and increasingly powerful mechanism of coordination.

This study is part of a series of studies aimed at addressing this gap in the literature. It presents an overview of the participation of Italy at the annual seven power summits since they began in 1975. It traces chronologically the role of Italy in the summit process, highlighting the issues which have been central to it, and explaining the most important patterns which have emerged in Italian behaviour in the summit throughout the 1975-88 period.

The present study should be considered only an introductory work because of limitations inherent in the research on which it is based. At this stage of the project, the author has yet to receive access to internal Italian government documents or to conduct extensive interviews with Italian government officials, two essential tasks in preparing a more definitive set of results. Nevertheless, this study has utilized a wide range of sources, with special reliance on newspaper coverage, press conference releases, existing scholarly work, and personal interviews with a number of past and present summit participants from all the summit countries. Extensive use was also made of materials obtained from the author's attendance at the Toronto summit, which provided first hand access to journalists, officials, government briefings and summit participants in general. The result is this first instalment in an ongoing research project aimed at a more definitive analysis of Italy's participation in the Seven Power Summits. This study, while necessarily subject to future revisions, should provide a useful introduction to an increasingly important area of research on the contemporary international political economy in general, and the attempts at policy coordination of the seven summit powers in particular.¹

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