

ABSTRACT

West German Foreign Policy and the Seven Power Summits

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This study is an attempt to assess, in some detail, Germany's participation in the economic summit process since Rambouillet in 1975. Through a separate analysis of each of the summits, those priorities and issues of concern for each of the German delegations over the past fourteen years will be highlighted, and the Federal Republic's relative success in pushing for its agenda in the summit process will be assessed.

It is recognized that such a detailed empirical analysis in itself, is not sufficient to allow an understanding of the relative importance of the summits in the general foreign policy process of the Federal Republic. This study, thus, also attempts to place economic summitry in Bonn's overall foreign affairs priorities and ultimately gain some understanding of how Germany views the summit itself. This is absolutely crucial since it puts both Germany's participation and the entire summit process into clearer perspective. The economic summits are an important, although not decisive aspect of the Federal Republic's foreign affairs. Germany recognizes the uniqueness of this process and considers it a valuable asset in an increasingly interdependent world, as it promotes awareness and offers an environment where the leaders of the most powerful economies are annually reminded of their interdependence. Although some specific decisions have been taken at summits (especially Bonn 1978 and Tokyo 1979), Germany does not and never has viewed the summit as a major international economic decision making forum.

The detailed study of the actual summits since 1975 reveals two remarkable consistencies in Germany's priorities. Since the beginning it has used the summits as a forum to promote its own views and seek some agreement in economic ideology from its partners especially pertaining to issues such as a reduction of protectionism through multilateral negotiations, containment of inflationary pressures, environment, North-South relations and has always taken a leading role in the general political decisions with special focus on East-West relations. Ultimately, using past trends as well as latest economic indices, government statements and elite interviews, this study will make a number of projections about Germany's priorities and role at the upcoming summit in Toronto.

In conclusion, the summits are seen as a very valuable process by the Federal Republic of Germany although its role and impact in Bonn should not be exaggerated. Only if Germany's own view of the summit process is kept in mind will it be truly possible to understand the impact and value of the economic summit not only for the Federal Republic but for the entire world.