

Beyond the G8: Will the West include the Rest?

By 2050, 8 of the 9 billion people on earth will be from non-Western countries, and only 1 billion will then be from advanced industrial countries of the West. The G8 Summits purport to deal with global challenges, but the global majority is not there, not today, and certainly not if we anticipate the future.

A recent survey by Colin Bradford of the Brookings Institution tackles the issues of G8 relevancy and the results are summarized below. Bradford, who is a Nonresident Senior Fellow at Brookings, received responses to questionnaire from 76 officials and experts from 16 countries, all of whom are involved in international reform. The survey results reveal a surprising degree of consensus on the state of the G8 on the eve of the G8 summit in Hokkaido, Japan.

Following is a snapshot of the main results:

Is the G8 in Good Shape?

- 85% Think the world needs a global steering mechanism, but only
- 15% Think the G8 is performing that role, and only
- 10% Think the G8 is viewed by world public opinion as an *effective* mechanism for international cooperation, and
- 8% Think the country composition of the G8 is viewed by world public opinion as *legitimate*.

Should the G8 model be abandoned?

- 65% Regard G8 summits as “the pivotal club for Western / like-minded countries” and
- 60% Think the G8 is performing that role.

Is the G8 Plus BRICSAM 5 (Brazil, India, China, South Africa and Mexico) a Better Model?

- 63% Favor the transformation of the G8 summit group into one which includes all 13 countries as full members.

Is Summit Reform a Potent Political Gesture for the United States?

On average, all respondents think that “reformed and expanded summits” could be important to the U.S. “as a vehicle for engaging with the rest of the world” and as a “high profile political step toward changing the perception of the U.S. in the world.”

75% “Favor the next president of the United States announcing his support for the 2009 summit in Italy to be convened in an expanded group of permanent members”.

Should the G8 take on a new mandate and focus more as a global steering mechanism?

80% Favor a stronger mandate and clearer mission for an expanded summit group to “take on the broad, evolving agenda of global challenges and provide strategic guidance to the international institutions on how to address them.”

Survey participants included 76 respondents, which were from the following countries:

U.S.: 26

Australia: 2

Current G8 countries:

Canada: 10
France: 2
Germany: 5
Italy: 3
Russia: 1
U.K.: 7

Emerging Market Economies:

Argentina: 1
Brazil: 5
Mexico: 3
China: 2
India: 2
South Korea: 1
South Africa: 4
Turkey: 2

Total G8: 54

Note: All 16 countries are members of the G20 finance ministers group.

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These survey results are analyzed in a chapter on “The United States and Summit Reform in a Transformational Era”, in Cooper, Andrew F. and Agata Antkiewicz (eds.), *Emerging Powers in Global Governance. Lessons from the Heiligendamm Process*. Studies in international governance series. Waterloo, ON: The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008.