



## **The Irrelevant G8 Summit in St. Petersburg**

The Group of Eight (G8) summit in St. Petersburg is one that will likely be remembered more for its off-color, on-microphone commentary by President Bush than by the legacy of its actions, which proved to be largely symbolic and irrelevant in the face of critical global challenges.

For although the G8 leaders gathered to discuss an ambitious agenda filled with critical issues such as energy security, the North Korean missile tests, Iran's nuclear ambitions and conflict in the Middle East, it became once again clear that this group of current leaders cannot resolve such global threats without the participation of other key countries, such as the emerging powers of China and India, who are now crucial players in world.

Take energy security – the key item on the original agenda for the St. Petersburg summit. While the G8 members discussed how to ensure a steady energy supply and efficiently manage the growth in demand, few – if any – concrete measures emerged from the talks because some of the largest energy producers and users were not at the table.

Or consider an item that surged to the top of the agenda in St. Petersburg: the crisis in the Middle East. How much more weight would the call for peace that emerged from St. Petersburg have had, if the voices of countries in the Middle East and of some other populous Muslim countries had been included.

Then there were the pressing global issues that were not even touched on the table in St. Petersburg, such as global climate change and the continuing global financial imbalances. These issues, so critical now for the globalized world, cannot be addressed successfully without the participation of major emerging and developing economies, including Brazil, China and India.

The St. Petersburg showcase of irrelevancy can be easily remedied, however. One obvious solution is to amplify and expand the G8 so it includes key players from the major emerging market economies. British Prime Minister Tony Blair has already suggested as much in his call to make it a G13 with the permanent addition of Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa to the group.

While a G13 would be a start, this proposal leaves out the critical region of the Middle East and would give no voice to Muslim countries, clearly a crucial addition given the need for discussion and negotiation on energy security, terrorism and trade. Therefore, in our view, the best solution – and the most simple and pragmatic -- is to follow the recommendation of former Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin and expand the G8 to a G20.

A working structure for the G20 already exists in the example of the successful and effective yearly forum of the G20 finance ministers, which includes representation from Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

In addition to being more geographically and culturally diverse than the G8, the G20 would be more broadly representative, including two thirds of the global population and approximately 90 percent of the global economy (compared to the current G8 representation of only one-fifth of the world's population and two-thirds of the global economy). As a result, a summit of leaders of the G20 would be a much more effective and legitimate forum for global negotiation and decision-making.

As in the case of reform the U.N. Security Council, restructuring the G8 will not come easily. Political rivalries and bureaucratic inertia are powerful obstacles. And there is the fear that an expanded summit group would no longer be a "club of democracies". But let's remember that the G8 leaders have just met in a country whose government has acted increasingly more authoritarian than democratic. In any case, what is the use of a club of democracies if it cannot meet the urgent global challenges of today and tomorrow?

Breaking the logjam that stops serious summit reform will require leadership from within the current G8. We have no doubt that a G20 summit would better serve U.S., European and Japanese global interests by increasing the inclusiveness and effectiveness of the global steering process as emerging economies come "into the tent" and are encouraged to contribute constructively to global issues that the old industrial countries cannot expect to solve on their own.

So why not seriously plan for a summit next year in Heiligendamm, Germany in 2007, in which the host, Germany, on behalf of the Europeans and spurred on by the US, shows true leadership by not merely inviting the leaders of the emerging powers as second-class guests but instead making them full members of a club that could actually give the world serious hope of addressing the many global problems we face in a credible manner.

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