

# BREAKING GLOBAL DEADLOCKS: Reflections on Global Governance

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Burrowing Owl, Oliver, B.C.



## Summary Notes

### **Session 1 – Stock-taking – Looking Backward**

The initial session focused on how the project had evolved since 2003 and what had been learned so far. Participants discussed reactions in various countries to the project's core ideas:

1. The role of government leaders in international decision-making was critical;
2. Existing international institutions were incapable of resolving deadlocks (especially with respect to global commons issues and issues connected with the impacts of globalization);
3. The G-8 in particular was insufficiently representative to be effective in confronting those key issues; and
4. Any successful leaders process had to be well prepared.

It was noted that response to the original “L-20 idea” had been variable across countries. The need to incorporate the large, rapidly developing regional powers (as exemplified in the “G-5” countries – China, India, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa) into global decision-making at the highest level was gaining broader acceptance, as reflected in recent comments by Brown, Sarkozy and others. Participants agreed that the L-20 label had been outgrown and that a sharpened project message was required. That said, there was also general agreement that the project continued to “add value”. There were prospects (closely related to both the current state of the G-8 and the changes which might flow from the US Presidential election later this year) for making an even greater impact in the period leading up to the 2010 G-8 Summit, which Canada will chair. Notwithstanding occasional positive high-level endorsements, however, it was acknowledged that the project's ideas still did not have an active “champion” among the current crop of leaders.

The dynamics of the ongoing G-8/G-5 relationship were explored – especially the growing dissatisfaction of the G-5 with the way in which their Summit involvement was being orchestrated and limited. The consensus was that the manner in which the Japanese were managing preparations for the Hokkaido Summit was likely to bring G-5 concerns to a head, to the point that leaders might decline an invitation to the Summit. The G-5 desire meaningful engagement with the G-8 on global problems for which their cooperation is critical. This desire was not being met. Some participants suggested that this impending conflict might be no bad thing if it demonstrated the need for institutional change and led the G-5 to develop a clearer sense of their collective interests. One alternative suggested was that China might consider hosting its own leaders' meeting early in 2009 on a subject or subjects of its choosing, to which



it would invite some but not all of the G-8 (perhaps the new US President, Japan and a single representative of the EU). This would allow the G-5 to finesse the question of their relationship to the G8 process.

These exchanges led to an extensive and recurring discussion of whether the project's objectives should be expressed specifically in terms of G-8 enlargement or more generally in terms of the need for new mechanisms at the level of leaders. It was generally agreed that the likelihood of formal G-8 expansion was not high, and that in any event this was not a G-5 goal. Participants noted that for many G-8 leaders, the current arrangements were "comfortable" and "non-threatening". Building on the G-8 was a non-starter; a new institution (or institutional arrangement) might make more sense as a project focus. The attitudes and interests of the various G-8 and G-5 countries were reviewed. Some participants noted that some cooperation between G-8 and G-5 countries was proceeding at levels below that of leaders, and that the process set in train at Heiligendamm should not be pre-judged before it had had the opportunity to generate results. Lessons for the G-8/G-5 talks from the debate over Security Council expansion were noted.

It was agreed that if the G-8/G-5 relationship came adrift at Hokkaido, the market for new ideas on global cooperation would be increased, and the project should have a "package" on the shelf ready to be put forward. A similar opportunity would be presented if the global economy deteriorated sharply in the next few years. Most participants thought that the project should focus on alternative mechanisms rather than the departure point of G-8 "reform". Canadian participants reflected on the implications for Canada of major institutional changes and the need to reframe the issues in terms of Canadian national interests to gain the support of the current government. In sum, it would be expedient to refocus the initiative as one of global governance innovation, with appropriate themes and topics as supporting illustrations.

Participants considered the possibility of new approaches from the US following the Presidential election. It was pointed out that any incoming President would face a lengthy agenda, and this area might not bulk large. On the other hand, there was a sense that the Democrats, at least, were searching for ideas on more flexible and effective international mechanisms. The debate over trade issues (especially as regards China) was beginning to ramp up, and could become destructive. US leadership on multilateral engagement cannot be assumed.

## Session 2 – The Immediate Future – Where do we go from here?

Plans for the next two project meetings were reviewed – Mexico City, March 10-11 (“The Future of the G-8 Summit and Global Deadlocks”) and Paris/OECD, March 31-April 1 (“The Economics of Climate Change Policy”). The context for this discussion was the set of 6 options laid out in the conference document entitled “Where do we put our time and money?”<sup>1</sup>

It was noted that the Mexico City meeting will focus strictly on the international governance issues, while the Paris meeting will deal with climate change as an example of the sort of deadlocked problem which the reform of international decision-making institutions could help resolve. This led to a debate which continued throughout the rest of the meeting of these two alternative directions (ie strictly governance abstracted from the technicalities of specific issues versus governance reform as an example of the feasibility of breaking a specific global deadlock).

During the discussion of the 6 options, participants emphasized the need for the project to be precise about the ideas being “sold”. A consistent, easy to communicate “package” of ideas needed to be developed for use in any of the settings envisaged. In this regard, the point was made that project participants were by and large experts in governance; from this perspective, they had a useful set of views, insights and ideas to offer as a product. It became evident during discussion that the options were not mutually exclusive, but potential elements of a schedule of meetings between now and 2010.

With respect to option 2, it was agreed that in the late Spring, subsequent to the Pennsylvania primary (April 22), the US landscape may be better defined. A small group should try to meet with foreign policy advisors of the Democratic and Republican Presidential candidates (all three if there are still three by then) to brief them on the ideas generated by the project. In addition, the invitation from the Italian sherpa team to brief them in the fall should be accepted (option 3). Similarly, an attempt should be made at the time of the Paris meeting at the end of March to meet with and brief President Sarkozy’s advisor, Jean-David Levitte (option 4). Efforts should continue to work with G-5 countries through the good offices of the Mexican sherpa (option 5). It was recommended that the format for these meetings should be reasonably consistent, based on the agenda devised for the March meeting in Mexico City.

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<sup>1</sup>1. Use CIGI 09 as the focal point for informing the Canadian approach to Summit enlargement at the 2010 G-8 meeting.

2. Provide input to the foreign policy advisors engaged with the remaining Presidential candidates in the USA

3. Focus on attempting to influence the G-8 Summit to be hosted by Italy in 2009

4. Approach French President Sarkozy and his foreign policy advisors on the subject of Summit enlargement

5. Seek to work with and support the “+5” countries, initially through the Mexican sherpa

6. Focus more on the dissemination of Summit enlargement ideas to a broader informed public (eg through publication of a second book, academic journal articles, op-ed pieces, magazine articles, postings on influential websites such as Slate)

The sixth option of broader dissemination of project ideas was taken as a given, with the specific suggestion, among others, of a significant op-ed piece for Canadian newspapers drafted jointly by three former Canadian sherpas. The Canadian piece would be a hard headed analysis of possible future changes of key international councils and the Canadian national interest in helping to shape that evolution. In a similar vein, the idea was raised of commissioning a prominent US foreign policy expert to write a major article (possibly for *Foreign Affairs*) which would examine the need and options for American re-engagement in the international community in the wake of the Bush Presidency. A joint piece by Andres Rozental, Gordon Smith, and Strobe Talbot would have a better chance of being accepted and widely read. The article could incorporate ideas from the project and adapt them to the particular context of a new American President in search of transformative ideas.

### **Session 3 – “Think Tank” Network**

In this session, project organizers sought input on the advisability and usefulness of more formally constituting a Global Policy and Governance Network (GPAGNet). Note was taken of 4 options<sup>2</sup>. Among the comments made were the following.

- An informal network (established through the project) already exists. Creating a formalized network was a good idea, and the task of managing it could be taken on through a collective effort by CFGS, CIGI and IDRC.
- The network’s work should not be limited to G-8 related issues, but address broad issues where global dialogue was needed.
- Instead of simply dealing with generalized “good ideas”, the network should be used to facilitate definition and communication of national interests by individual countries.
- It was noted that the more important the issue, the more likely it was that governments would rely on “homegrown” sources of advice. Notwithstanding this tendency, the new network could make itself useful by providing governments with an efficient and effective way of arraying new ideas, assessing reaction across the globe to new initiatives, and facilitating real time access to a credible set of international experts.
- In answer to the question -- where was the demand for a group such as GPAGNet? -- it was noted that so far Japan, Mexico, Italy and the OECD seemed to feel that a network along these lines would be helpful. In addition, the network could be expected to generate demand through its work.
- The network needed more representation from Africa. South Africa was not enough. We need to explore options for engaging people from the different African regions.

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<sup>2</sup>1. Explore the usefulness and practicality of associating GPAGNet with CIGI/IDRC -- use CIGI 09 as the launch point for this think tank/research institution network  
2. Explore the usefulness and practicality of associating GPAGnet with the OECD  
3. Explore the usefulness and practicality of associating GPAGnet with the World Bank  
4. Explore the usefulness and practicality of associating GPAGnet with US foundations

Overall, participants agreed that work on GPAGNet should proceed, although emphasis was placed on the need to develop a clear mandate/mission, and no resolution was reached on whether the network should be associated with (funded through) any other body.

#### **Session 4 – Advice for Planned Meetings**

This discussion took up topics from earlier sessions. Among the points made were the following.

- Some participants suggested that there would be a need for a project meeting to assess the outcome of the Hokkaido Summit, especially if G-8/G-5 relations worsened.
- Would it be possible to say anything new about climate change, given how crowded the field was? Perhaps the project (and/or GPAGNet) should be looking over the horizon at such emerging issues as regulation of synthetic genomes or regulation of geo-engineering. Others countered that unless an issue were both critical and deadlocked, leaders did not need to be directly involved.
- The suggestion was made that coming project meetings should focus on “outreach”, mainly to G-5 countries such as Mexico, Brazil and India. There was a discussion of which major African country should be included in this effort, and it was generally agreed that Nigeria needed to be included in addition to South Africa. Participants also pointed to the need to mobilize support for project ideas through “inreach” aimed at G-8 countries. In this regard, Russia was cited as worthy of special attention. Review of existing plans for meetings over the coming year revealed that many of the suggestions for outreach and inreach were already covered (although meetings would probably have to be added in Washington DC and Africa).
- A briefing was suggested for key funders already active in the globalization/development field – Carlos Slim, Jim Balsillie, Frank Giustra.
- The need for a communications strategy for the project was discussed. Various approaches to a heightened media presence were canvassed, including drafting of op-ed articles in key publications and background briefings for prominent commentators (eg Garton Ash, Moisi). The point was made that, to have a significant media impact, project proponents would need to present ideas which were new, easily understood, and timely.

#### **Session 5 – The Development Dimension**

The session began with broad acknowledgment that the development assistance system was in a parlous state. The world has changed -- levels of official development assistance are dwarfed by flows of private capital and the activities of sovereign wealth funds. Participants questioned the efficacy of existing approaches to encouraging development, especially in Africa. The massive and intractable nature of the problems facing that continent was outlined. An absorbing, informed and insightful discussion of aspects of development and development assistance ensued, but it was confirmed that this was not a topic which it would be fruitful for leaders to address on its own (the Petra judgment was confirmed). There were many insights shared with respect to the essential facts of life regarding effective design of any compensatory development initiatives which might be included in any package deals.

## **Main Conclusions**

1. The “message” derived from the project must be refined and clarified if it is to have a major impact.
2. That message should be generalized away from specific proposals for G-8 enlargement or G-8/G-5 merger, while retaining the key project findings that: (1) the role of leaders in resolving deadlocks is critical; (2) existing international institutions are incapable of effectively addressing the challenges of globalization; (3) the leading, regional, rapidly developing countries must form integral elements of the central structures of global decision-making from the start; and (4) any successful leaders process had to be well prepared.
3. The project’s “product/message” must be ready for swift deployment in response to events (eg a G-8/G-5 split at Hokkaido, a significant economic downturn). This will require the development of a coherent communications strategy aimed at ensuring that the project’s final stages produce results (ie influence international actors and events). This strategy will include drafting of op-ed articles, backgrounding respected commentators and commissioning articles in leading journals.
4. The project’s upcoming schedule of meetings should reflect both “outreach” to G-5 (and other) countries -- Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria – and “inreach” to mobilize support among G-8 countries – Canada, Italy, France, Russia, US. A variation on the Mexico City agenda should be used as the “template” for these meetings. Ongoing work through the OECD should continue.
5. Specifically with respect to developing support for project ideas in the US, care should be taken to act in a non-partisan fashion (i.e. brief all remaining candidates’ staffs) and advantage should be taken of the possible lower ebb of political activity in late spring and early summer.
6. Work on establishing GPAGNet should proceed; the network’s mandate should match the newly refined and clarified project “message” referred to above. Administrative/management/funding aspects of the network remain to be finalized.
7. Development and development assistance should not be subjects for consideration at a leaders’ forum. Nevertheless, there will inevitably be a “development assistance” element in any set of actions at a summit that breaks a global deadlock on a critical issue.