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G8 Outreach and the Absence of Hothouse International Institutions

Posted on [June 18, 2008](#) by [Arthur Stein](#)



Alan's [post on Monday](#) focused on the views of G8 members about the possibility of expanding their membership. This post was drafted before Alan's and focuses instead on the G-8's outreach efforts.

I've described in previous posts the different bases for constructing international groupings and how the BRIC and IBSA originated but have not expanded so far.

There is still another way to construct an international grouping, and that is through the workings of external actors. Institutions can be constructed in an artificial hothouse environment, at the instigation of others. The Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) came into being in April 1948 and emerged from Secretary of State Marshall's desire to have a coordinated vision for postwar reconstruction and an integrated request for aid. Similarly, constructed an international grouping by inviting a set of countries to join the Partnership for Peace (an extension but short of full membership in NATO).

Something similar has been occurring in the G-8. Some of the members of the G-8 have undertaken what have come to be called outreach efforts at their annual summits. The host nation for the G-8 summit rotates annually and the host is in charge of the agenda. In recent years, host countries have invited others to attend events at the periphery of the G-8 or to take part only in specific meetings devoted to a particular subject.

This began at the head of state level in 2000 when Japan invited Nigeria as the Chair of the G77, South Africa as the Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Algeria as the mandated representative of the

Organization of African Unity(OAU), and Thailand as the chair of the Tenth Session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD X) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Africa was a particular focus of the 2002 summit in Canada, and so the presidents of Algeria, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa were invited to meet with the G-8.

The French extended the practice in 2003, inviting a number of leading developing countries including Algeria, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, and South Africa. Ironically, the IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) forum grew out of discussions between the three at the time of their attendance at the G-8 meeting in Evian in 2003.

When the US hosted in 2004 its focus was the Middle East and North Africa, so its invited leaders were from Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Yemen, and Turkey.

In 2005, the UK returned to the focus on Africa, inviting the leaders of Algeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania. It also invited Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa for discussions of climate change and the global economy.

In 2006, Russia invited Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa.

In 2007, Germany not only invited what has come to be called the Outreach 5 (O5: Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa) to meet on the periphery of the annual G-8 meeting, but proposed institutionalizing this as “the Heiligendamm Process.” It also invited Algeria, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa as well as Ghana and Ethiopia (the latter two because they chaired particular IGOs).

Japan, the 2008 host, has its own invitation list. It is inviting the Outreach 5 but has also invited Australia, Indonesia and South Korea. And for its discussions of African development, the Japanese government is expected to invite eight African nations, including South Africa.

I would conclude the following from this quick examination:

1) The G-8 has implicitly institutionalized a process of inviting others to their summits. But their different interests have generated different invitees. [See Alan’s discussion for their different views on expansion.]

2) The G-8 has been quite concerned with Africa and repeatedly invite African heads of state. [None of the proposals for G8 expansion will deal with this as long as African development remains a key concern for many of the members.]

3) The BICSAM set (minus ASEAN) has been a relatively regular feature (after this year’s summit they will have appeared at 5 of the last 6).

4) When describing what was discussed in the meeting that included the heads of state of Brazil, India, China, South Africa, and Mexico, the host nation usually says climate change, and sometimes climate change and the global economy. The inference I draw from a quick scan of statements and documents is that the G-8 recognizes that tackling certain issues, such as climate change, requires more than their own involvement but also the BICSAM set. They do not, as a group, feel that such extended involvement is as yet required for global economic issues in general and that would require extending their membership (Alan's post presents a breakdown of what is known about various members' views).

5) Despite their recurring appearance at the summit, the leaders of these countries (BICSAM) have made no attempt to constitute themselves as a grouping. This may as yet happen, but has not so far. Note the irony that an objectively-derived economically-rooted designation created by Goldman Sachs has had more real-world traction than the politically-rooted construction of the G-8.

It is striking the given their recurring invitations to attend G8 meetings, and the proposals by some G8 members for their inclusion in an expanded G13, the BICSAM countries have not moved to construct themselves as a grouping. The politics underlying this diffidence is itself an interesting question to address.

1

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