

The tartan talks

– Gleneagles 2005



The G8, Gleneagles, Scotland, July 2005: the US election well over, a UK election perhaps also fought and won. Do the G8 meetings achieve anything other than large security bills? **Nicholas Bayne**, **Shinichiro Uda** and **Heidi Ullrich** covered the Sea Island G8 in 2004 and found some cause for optimism.

Tony Blair was active at Sea Island, especially on Middle East issues. But he was also thinking ahead to the next G8 summit, which he expects to host and chair at Gleneagles in July 2005.

It is rare for a leader to host a summit more than once. Mitterrand, Kohl, Chirac and Chrétien of Canada have all done it, but Blair would be the first British prime minister to get this chance. The first summit he chaired, Birmingham 1998 (see *LSE Magazine*, winter 1998), introduced some fundamental reforms to the summit process: adding Russia to make G7 into G8; allowing the leaders to meet on their own, without supporting ministers;

having a shorter agenda and less documentation. These reforms rejuvenated the G8 summit, so that Birmingham and the four summits that followed, up to Kananaskis in 2002, were more productive than those that went before.

Evian in 2003 and Sea Island this year showed some loss of performance, with the agenda being too general and the G8 documents sacrificing quality for quantity. But these summits still had the merit of reconciling the G8 members after the deep divisions caused by Iraq. Blair wants the Gleneagles summit to return to the earlier simplicity, with a precise agenda of two or three items only. He has already said publicly that one



President Chirac and President Bush at G8's Sea Island summit, 2004. The 2005 summit will be at the Gleneagles Hotel in Perthshire (pictured below)



priority subject should be Africa and a second the global environment, especially climate change.

Africa was on the summit agenda at Genoa in 2001 and was the main subject at Kananaskis (*LSE Magazine*, winter 2002). There the G8 agreed an Africa Action Plan, which was closely linked to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The main proponents of NEPAD – presidents Mbeki of South Africa, Obasanjo of Nigeria, Wade of Senegal and Bouteflika of Algeria – took part in the Kananaskis summit. They were invited back to Evian and Sea Island and Blair expects to invite them again to Gleneagles.

The G8 Africa Plan, like NEPAD, covers peace-keeping, standards of governance and economic development. The main achievement at Sea Island was agreement on G8 support for African peace-keeping operations, in the form of training and transport facilities. But economic progress has not kept pace with this. The G8 have promised to increase their aid to Africa, but have not offered more market access for African exports nor improved the terms of debt relief, though that is what the African leaders want most.

Blair will aim to have Gleneagles make real advances in helping Africa escape from poverty and meet the Millennium Development Goals for education and health. The G8 are already associating non-G8 countries, international institutions and African governments with this process, through the African Partners Group. Blair has created a new Commission for Africa, bringing in the private sector alongside G8 and African governments and aiming to generate more public awareness of what needs to be done for Africa. Trade will be one essential component, now that the Doha Development Agenda is moving forward

again. Finance will be another, with the hope of reaching agreement on the International Finance Facility proposed by Gordon Brown.

While the G8 has moved Africa up its agenda, the global environment has had less prominence. It is necessary to go back to the Rio conference of 1992 to find major summit successes in the environment. Before Rio, the summit could agree in urging all countries to pay more attention to protecting the environment, both through domestic policies and international agreements. But once the debate moved to specific issues like climate change and biodiversity, a deep division opened between European (and Japanese) enthusiasts and North American sceptics. While in Europe policy was driven by consumers and civil society activists, in the US it was dominated by producers and business interests in energy, agriculture and pharmaceuticals. Because of this transatlantic divide, the G8 members have steadily moved apart on environmental issues. At Gleneagles, Blair hopes to reverse this trend and to find ways of bridging the gap.

The reforms that Blair introduced at Birmingham seven years ago cut the leaders loose from their bureaucratic apparatus. This gave them greater freedom to develop wider links with other forces – with non-G8 governments, with private sector movements in business, and with civil society. This wider outreach is essential if the G8 summit is to be effective and carry conviction in today's globalising world. But the Sea Island summit made only limited advances in this field and the Americans did not act to associate civil society bodies with G8's work. The British, on the other hand, have a strong tradition of involving business and civil society in summit

preparations and this is bound to prevail in the run-up to Gleneagles. Blair is also on record as favouring wider outreach to leading developing countries, though he is more cautious on enlarging the G8 by admitting more countries.

In recent years, especially since 11 September 2001, the G8 summit has moved away from its original economic agenda and towards giving priority to political issues, or at least those where economics and politics are apparently inseparable, like Africa and the Middle East. The summit has been quite successful in areas where international action is required, but less effective when domestic policies need to be adapted, for example in agriculture. In his approach to next year's Gleneagles summit, Blair is returning to the mainstream economic agenda of trade, finance and the environment. He has chosen issues where G8 members need to take difficult domestic decisions in order to reach durable international agreement. He is seeking to simplify the summit process and make it more transparent and accessible. In this way he is trying to revive the original virtues of the summit process and adapt them to the conditions of advancing globalisation.

What Sea Island achieved

The G8 Sea Island summit in June 2004 marked the 30th gathering of the annual meeting of leaders of the major industrialised countries. However, in many ways Sea Island showed the signs of an 'institution' still in the early stages of maturity: confident in its aims and abilities, but somewhat unsure of its methods. Initially established to discuss economic issues of common concern to its members, the Sea Island G8 continued a summit trend of expanding its agenda to include political, security, and social



G8 leaders included Tony Blair, UK prime minister and Junichiro Koizumi, prime minister of Japan

topics of concern to both members and non-members, as well as launching several new programmes that strengthen its role in the collective management of the international system.

However, the summit also signalled a break in several earlier positive initiatives regarding how to achieve these aims, such as participating in an enlarged dialogue with key developing countries, engaging with civil society – at the Okinawa G8 summit in 2000 and Evian in 2003, the host government made strides in acknowledging the voice of civil society, providing civil society representatives with their own centre near the summit site. The US, however, made no provision for civil society to be heard, or for achieving a good balance in the quantity and quality of the documentation – in Birmingham in 1998, Blair advocated a return to the original summit tradition of a single communiqué. Sea Island produced 15 statements and action plans.

As host, the US established the three themes of the summit: freedom, security and prosperity. Although not officially on the agenda, Iraq was the source of much of the discussion, division, and arguably the most far-reaching action plans produced at Sea Island. Two key documents emerged. The first established a Partnership for Progress and a Common Future in the Region of the Broader Middle East and North Africa based on common values such as human dignity, freedom, democracy and social justice. Second was the G8 Plan of Support for Reform governing the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, consisting of eight new initiatives. Institutionally, the Plan establishes a Forum for the Future in which the foreign and finance ministers of regional

and G8 countries can strengthen their dialogue on bringing about reform. Additional initiatives include increasing literacy by 20 million people in the region by 2015 through the training of 100,000 teachers, and strengthening entrepreneurship through microfinance, vocational training and private enterprise activities.

The G8 also adopted a bold Action Plan on Non-Proliferation in which leaders reaffirmed commitments on nuclear nonproliferation made at Kananaskis in 2002 and Evian as well as supporting measures to increase the effectiveness of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The leaders also broadened a previous initiative in both substance and scope through the Action Plan on Expanding Global Capability for Peace Support Operations, which includes commitments to train and equip 75,000 troops globally by 2010 for both regional and international peace support operations. The G8 was quick to add that all such activities would be carried out in line with the United Nations Charter.

The G8 statement on trade was stronger than in 2003 but failed to make longer term commitments. Several documents showed the G8's faith in market forces and developments in science and technology for increasing prosperity, improving health, and protecting the environment. G8 agreed to 'take all necessary steps' to eliminate polio by 2005 as well as to support the development of an HIV vaccine through a global consortium of scientists, funded with an initial donation of \$15 million from the United Nations. The 3R Action Plan and Progress for Implementation Initiative committed G8 members to reduce, reuse and recycle their products and materials.

The content and scope of the commitments and action plans agreed at Sea Island showed that the institution of this summit has benefited from its 30 years of experience. However, the G8's inconsistency in incorporating the views of other actors in the development of its plans as well as its plethora of complex documentation reveal that the summit still lacks the wisdom that comes with maturity. The 2005 G8 at Gleneagles provides Tony Blair with another opportunity to urge the summit to act its age.

Shivering in Savannah

While the leaders enjoyed warm ocean breezes and sandy beaches on Sea Island, the 3,500 members of the press shivered in near freezing temperatures, thanks to over-zealous air conditioning, at the International Media Centre 80 miles inland in the city of Savannah.

The Media Centre was on the banks of the Savannah River across from the historic heart of old Savannah. Representatives of the press were rapidly transported across the river in restored ferries, but then endured long waits as police checked their bags. Security was tight not only in the Centre but throughout the city. Due to fears of a terrorist attack or the massive protests seen at the 2001 Genoa summit, the US spared no

expense with security bill estimates as high as \$35 million. The 350 demonstrators, many of whom were peaceful members of Falun Gong, were therefore estimated to cost around \$100,000 each.

Unlike previous host organising committees, the US organisers required journalists and broadcasters to purchase workstations and supplies. Perhaps this and the time-consuming two-stage accreditation process explained why nearly half the workstations in the Media Centre remained unoccupied. And, for all that Sea Island was highly stage managed, fewer leaders than at previous summits visited the Media Centre for a traditional final press conference. ■

The University of Glasgow will host a conference on 29-30 June 2005 on Development, Sustainability and Finance – the Role of the G8 and the Gleneagles Summit. More details about this conference will be available on www.gla.ac.uk from early 2005.

A Gleneagles simulation

During 2004-05, graduate students taking the Economic Diplomacy option in LSE's International Relations Department will conduct a simulation of the Gleneagles G8 summit. Students will be allocated to different G8 countries in teams of two, with four representing the UK chair.



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