

Judith Huigens and Arne Niemann (2014)

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MULTILATERALISM AND MULTILATERALISM LIGHT**

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# THE EU IN THE G8: BETWEEN EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM AND MULTILATERALISM LIGHT

Judith Huigens and Arne Niemann

## INTRODUCTION

For nearly 40 years, a group of arguably the world's most powerful state leaders has come together in an informal setting to discuss a multitude of international issues. Born out of frustration with the inefficiency and slow decision-making of existing international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the summits were intended to bring together a small party of powerful state leaders for a 'direct, unscripted, unbureaucratic exchange between a few heads of government' (Bayne 1995). Apart from these heads of state/government, the summit has also seen the permanent representation of the European Union, since as early as 1977.

Without a secretariat, a formal founding treaty, or a permanent body of representation, the G8 summit has always remained an *ad hoc* conference, which is hosted by a different state each year. The G8 has therefore been described as a case of informal global governance, which was to create an intimate and small setting for those of the highest authority to exchange views, hereby reducing the transactions costs in international relations in general. This 'multilateralism light', as Penttälä (2009) calls it, is best suited for coordinating policies, tackling acute crises and launching new initiatives.

These characteristics place summitry, and the G8 specifically, into a special category of multilateralism, of which the relationship with *effective* multilateralism as envisaged by the EU is not evident. In fact, 'multilateralism light' and effective multilateralism are only two

interpretations of a variety of multilateralisms that exists out there in the international domain. One of the first questions that needs to be addressed here, is whether these two interpretations of multilateralism are conflicting or compatible, because the answer to this question provides us with indicators of an EU acting in pursuit of effective multilateralism.

The definition of effective multilateralism as used in this volume indicates that informal governance at most indirectly contributes to effective multilateralism, since it lacks any kind of enforcing rules or charters. However, the G8 does have the ability to stimulate and facilitate other forms of international cooperation, by endorsing principles, stimulating activities, showing leadership and promoting reform (Putnam and Bayne 1987: 158; Pentillä 2005: 85; Gstöhl 2007: 3). For this reason, Dobson (2007: xvii) refers to the G8 as 'plate spinner'. The overarching role of the G8 enables it to put into motion other tools of global governance, thus 'spin the plates'. This suggests a possible division of labour between formal and informal global governance (Pentillä 2009:2).

On a more critical note, informal governance can also have harmful effects on more institutionalized arrangements. For example, the exclusive membership of the 'G's' and the lack of enforceability of the agreements can possibly undo trust that has previously been created by more formalized tools of multilateralism (Jokela 2011: 59; Pentillä 2005: 84). However, the most fundamental critique on summitry, is that it constitutes a form of multilateralism that is based upon interests as opposed to norms, thus incorporating the 'old vices' of realist power politics (Tedesco and Youngs 2009; Jokela 2011: 51). Still, the G8, more than other summits such as the G20 or the G77, is a summit of like-minded western states, which makes it more suitable than other G's to act as a form of norm-based multilateralism.

As a result, in this case two scenarios of EU operationalization of effective multilateralism within the G8 can be distinguished. The first scenario is that the EU tries to make the G8 a more effective 'plate spinner', and thus able to contribute to effective and efficient performance of other, more formalized forms of global governance. The second scenario is of a more radical nature and constitutes an EU that aims to enlarge and formalize the G8, as well as make it more focused on norms as opposed to interests. We will observe the extent to which the EU tries to operationalize effective multilateralism by looking at its contribution to recent reforms of the G8, and the EU's position at the G8. Two simultaneous reforms have taken place in 2009-10. The first reform was the establishment of the G20 in 2009 (see the contribution of Debaere, Lesage and Orbie to this volume), and the consequences of this development for the future of the G8. The second reform constituted the implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon, which resulted in the replacement of the rotating presidency by the permanent president of the European Council.

We now continue this chapter with a look at the effects of internal and external reform respectively on the ability of the EU to realize effective multilateralism, the main conclusion being that throughout these two reforms, the relation between these two forms of multilateralism remains awkward, with the EU generally lacking the formal tools to pursue the radical scenario and producing moderate results at the 'plate spinner' scenario.

### **EXTERNAL REFORM: THE FUTURE OF THE G8 IN A G20-WORLD**

The EU has been presented with an interesting opportunity to operationalize its notion of effective multilateralism due to increasing criticism on the G8, and pressures to reform. The G8 has, for example, been condemned for its lack of representativeness, for not being sufficiently democratic, and for its inability to deal with urgent global (especially financial) issues (cf. Cooper 2007: 4; Hajnal and Panova 2012). Most reform proposals have focused on

questions of ‘outreach’ (the extension of participation or membership), whereas the dimensions of ‘in-reach’ (institutionalization of the summit system) and ‘down-reach’ (involvement and participation of civil society) have received considerably less attention (Kirton 2008: 1). In this chapter we will take up the ‘out-reach’ dimension since it constitutes the most important aspect of the G8 reform debate. In this section, we set out to show that the reform discussion has ultimately been settled in favour of a division of labour between the G20 and the G8, with the EU playing a substantial role in both forums.

The discussion in the context of G8 reform has been marked by a multitude of proposals, ranging from expanding or reducing the G8’s membership, supplementing it with additional bodies, or abolishing the G8 altogether. Two issues have been taken up repeatedly: the legitimacy and the effectiveness of the G8. Most positions have, broadly speaking, followed at least in part one of the following two lines of argumentation. On the one hand, a small number of participants would lead to more cohesion, homogeneity concerning values, flexibility and thus more effectiveness. On the other hand, a more inclusive membership would lead to more representativeness, legitimacy and also effectiveness in the sense that all key actors are included (cf. Kirton 2008: 3; similarly Gnath 2010: 5f).

One can broadly distinguish between the following approaches to G8 reform (cf. Hajnal and Panova 2012: 65ff): (a) expansion of the G8 with the goal of including especially the emerging powers as full members of the G8 (e.g. Sachs 1998); (b) G8+G5: these approaches stress an institutionalized dialogue between the G8 countries and the emerging powers (G5), rather than pressing towards a full membership of the G5; (c) G20 as substitute for the G8, the so-called L20 initiative; (d) replacement of the G8 by some other grouping with a different membership composition (e.g. Kenen *et al.* 2004; Roach 2004); (e) coexistence of the G8 and G20 (e.g. Dobson 2001; Brown and Berlusconi 2009); (f) coexistence of the G8 and a new

group (e.g. Haynal 2005; Bergsten 2004); (g) variable geometry: this approach has the G8 at the core of discussions while leaving appropriate room for wider participation, involving various combinations, depending on the agenda (Hajnal and Panova 2012: 77).

Subsequently, we examine the positions and roles played by the EU, its member states as well as other G8 countries and the BRICs in the (external) reform debate, before analysing the extent to which the EU has furthered the notion of effective multilateralism in the external reform debate.

### **The role of the EU and its member states in the G8 reform debate**

For many years *Germany's* position concerning G8 reform has been ambiguous. While part of the Red-Green coalition, Finance Minister Steinbrück argued that the G8 would become superfluous in the medium term, would need to be replaced by a more representative body and advocated for an expansion of the G8 (Fues 2007: 11). Subsequently, Chancellor Merkel showed her reluctance concerning 'forward-looking positions on the reform of the global-governance architecture'. She clearly rejected formal membership of the 'Outreach 5' in the G8 (Fues 2007: 19). At the G8 summit in Heiligendamm (2007), Germany proposed a new model for the outreach process (G8+5) by introducing the 'Heiligendamm Process'. This process went beyond previous *ad hoc* invitations as it foresaw an institutionalization, without implying full membership within the summit structure (Fues 2007: 19). This change of attitude towards the G8 reform has been interpreted as a compromise within the Christian Democrat/Social Democrat coalition in order to reconcile the positions of Steinbrück and the Chancellor (Cooper 2007). After the Heiligendamm Process and with the emergence of the financial crisis Merkel became a clear advocate of broadening the G20 to the leaders' level (Seith 2009). Merkel still appreciates the G8 as a forum for opinion-building among leaders

on global issues and thus favours a coexistence of both groupings. However, she regards the G20 as the more salient forum (Dullien and Herr 2010: 28), and prefers a greater degree of institutionalization of the G20.

*Great Britain* has played an integral part in the debate concerning G8 reform especially from 2005 onwards (G8 Research Group 2005: 41). Prime Minister Blair advocated turning the G8 into a G13, building on the 'G8+G5' formula that was tested at the G8 Gleneagles summit in 2005. Blair thus sought to make China, India, Brazil, South Africa and Mexico full members of the G8 (Hajnal and Panova 2012: 71). Gordon Brown followed a similar policy, but went a step further: Even after the success of the Heiligendamm Process he called for a deeper involvement of the 'Outreach 5' states in the central proceedings of the G8 (Gnath 2010: 8). But in contrast to French president Sarkozy, he opposed a formal inclusion of those countries as full G8 members. He argued that the informal outreach process was sufficient to make the G8 more representative and that his experience in the EU-27 proved that effective decision-making is difficult in larger groups (Pilling 2008). Brown has been a 'leading advocate of the G20 format' and argued 'that the old G8 club of rich, industrial countries was no longer acceptable for directing world affairs' (Parker 2009 cited in Hajnal and Panova 2012: 71). He proved his commitment to the G20 by hosting the second G20 summit in April 2009 in London (Pettifor 2010: 39). Current Prime Minister Cameron has shown similar commitment to the G20 as a complementary part within the international global governance architecture. He advocated strengthening the role of the G20, however, without substantially formalizing it for example by establishing a permanent secretariat (Cameron 2011).

*France* has been a strong advocate of G8 reform over the past decade. Former President Chirac repeatedly highlighted the 'importance of adapting the G8 to global evolutions in the power-base if the institution is to remain successful as a coordinating body'. He pointed to the

lack of legitimacy of the G8 and stressed that it is ‘necessary to hear from those that represent a growing proportion of international economic activity or population’ (*cf.* G8 Research Group 2005: 13). However, the French government seems to have been reluctant to clearly state its position on the formal expansion of the G8 (G8 Research Group 2005: 42). Under President Sarkozy this changed decisively. Even after the success of the Heiligendamm Process, Sarkozy clearly demanded the permanent extension of the G8 to a G14 - including China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico and Egypt (Gnath 2010: 8) - and played an important role in the establishment of the G20. He also showed strong support for the G20 by advocating, together with Chancellor Merkel, the institutionalization and valorisation of the G20 within the global governance system.

*Italy* was one of the first countries calling for G8 reform. Since the Genoa summit of 2001, Italy has been committed to expand the dialogue with emerging and developing countries. Since 2004 Italy seems to advocate the expansion of the G8 and to include China and India as full members. Berlusconi underlined at the Sea Island Summit of 2004 that ‘it doesn’t make much sense for us to talk about the economy of the future without two countries that are protagonists on the world stage’ (cited according to G8 research group 2005: 23). For the period since the financial crisis there is evidence for two types of preferred reform scenarios. On the one hand, Italy seems to foster a strategy of ‘variable geometry’, where the G8 remains at the core while leaving room for various other participants and/or forums, depending on the issue at stake (Hajnal and Panova 2012: 77). On the other hand, Italy seems to support the coexistence of the G8 and the G20 (Brown and Berlusconi 2009). Italy clearly refuses the replacement of the G8 by the G20 but rather stresses their complementarity. Italy’s attitude makes sense considering its strategic interests: its place as a member of the G8 gives it a disproportionately large amount of political power relative to its economic size (G8 research Group 2005: 24; Stella 2010: 49). Italy accepts an important role of the G20 during



the international financial crisis, but it does not support an extension of its mandate to other areas, such as climate change, international security and development since those issues can be discussed effectively in other formats such as the (expanded) G8 (Stella 2010: 50).

The *European Union* has for most part taken a low profile role in the G8 reform debate. However, it seems that Commission President Barroso has played a key role in the establishment of the G20 at leader's level in 2008 (Larionova and Renard 2012; European Commission 2010). Two weeks after Lehman Brothers announced its bankruptcy, Barroso and Sarkozy went to Camp David and are said to have convinced US President Bush (hardly a multilateralist) to support the broadening of the G20 to leaders' level (interview, Brussels, September 2012). At the same time, Barroso is said to have secured EU membership in that new forum (Griesse 2010: 31). Interestingly, contrary to France and Britain, the EU does not seem to support the idea of (greater) institutionalization of the G20. Although there are no official public statements to this effect, internally Barroso and Van Rompuy seem to hold the view that the G20 should remain an informal leaders' driven process that should focus on content and not on structures. Moreover, informal solutions are thought to suit the EU better than formal ones, because in informal settings there is no need for the EU to define itself, while this is more difficult in more formal settings, such as in the United Nations.

### **The other G8 countries and the BRICS in the G8 reform debate**

How are the positions of the EU and its (G8) member states to be situated within the broader range of positions? Among the other G8 countries, *Canada* has by far been the staunchest supporter of broadening the G20 to the leaders' level since the late 1990s. Although Canada strongly advocated the L20 initiative, it never regarded it as a substitute for the G8 (G8 Research Group 2005: 7). *The United States*, by contrast, regarded the creation of a Leader's

G20 for a long time with caution. The same applies to initiatives to expand and reform the G8. This reluctance can be explained through the predominant US perception that such reform of the international summit architecture would likely go hand in hand with a diminished US influence (*cf.* G8 Research Group 2005: 47; Cooper 2007: 19). This view gradually changed over the years and from around 2009 onwards the US seems to have become one of the stronger supporters of the Leader's G20 (Anderson 2010: 74). *Japan* has been highly ambivalent on G8 reform as well as on the creation of the L20. On the one hand, Japan considers itself as a 'bridge between the predominant European or North Atlantic nations of the G7/G8, and the emerging powers, particularly within the Asian region'. On the other hand, Japan also tries to preserve its unique position as the only non-Western country in the G8 (G8 Research Group 2005: 28). Towards the end of last decade, Japan became more supportive of the L20 initiative (*cf.* Kirton 2012: 8). Similar to the US, *Russia* has been skeptical about the extension of the G8. It has been suggested that Russia 'would not want to demote itself to a club where it is equal to financially delicate emerging economic middle powers like Indonesia or Argentina' (G8 Research Group 2005: 37). Russia's position in the reform of the international summit architecture is to some extent special: on the one hand, it is a full member of the G8. On the other hand, Russia is also a member of the BRICs forum. Due to an often complicated relationship with the Western G8 states, Russia tends to put more emphasis on bilateral relations, and also focuses common interests within the BRICs grouping (Hajnal and Panova 2012: 72).

The *BRICs* countries faced a certain dilemma in the debate on the reform of the international summit architecture. On the one hand they would benefit from close engagement with the G8 or even a full membership, especially in terms of trade and foreign investment, but on the other hand they would lose their credibility and legitimacy to be the leaders of the global

South once they joined the exclusive 'club of the rich' (e.g. Chin 2008: 84). In contrast to the G8, the G20 is a forum that better allows them to cope with this dilemma (e.g. Hurrell 2010).

### **The outcome of the debate**

It seems that the issue has, at least temporarily, been settled in favour of coexistence between the G8 and the G20, with some elements of variable geometry (at least on the fringes). The G20 seems to have solved the issues of legitimacy and representation that haunted the G8. Also, the instalment of the G20 has enabled the G8 to return to its original small-scale informal attire. The relocation of the 2012 summit from Chicago to the much more secluded location of Camp David serves as an example of this trend. In line with the Italian position, a division of labour seems to have developed between the two forums, with the G20 as the financial and economic forum, and the G8 focusing more on political issues. In terms of effectiveness the renewed informality of the summit seems to have made the G8 more humble in its intentions. The G8 once again serves as a catalyst for ideas, leaving more ambitious decision-making up to other institutions, among which the G20.

What was the effect of this external reform to the position of the EU at the summit? A hypothetical question of relevance in this regard, is what would have happened to EU representation within the G8, if the Group had indeed been enlarged? It is not unlikely that a restructuring of the G8 would have called into question the legitimacy of the EU's double representation. If the G8 had been enlarged, the goal of small-scale intimacy may have justified a debate on the appropriateness of having as many as six European representatives. The financial crisis, however, changed the direction of the transformation completely, and resulted in co-existence. In this situation, both the EU institutions and the individual member states are able to play a role in both institutions. The EU even managed to become a fully-

fledged member of the G20 from the start (as opposed to the rather vague status of participant at the G8 summit), an indicator of its position within the G8. Thus the external reform ensured a large role of the European members both in the G8 and in the G20. More specifically, the reinforcement of the original informal setting of the G8 summit continues to serve the interests of the EU. In addition, through its early presence within the G20, the EU has secured (continued) participation at the top tables of global governance (cf. Jokela 2011: 66).

It (thus) seems that the EU has furthered the notion of effective multilateralism only moderately in the external reform debate. Overall it seems that in terms of the two scenarios that we elaborated in the introduction, the EU has rather worked towards more effective plate-spinning in the G8 and G20 as well as towards potentially more effective cooperation between the EU, the G8 and the G20. Interestingly, the EU has done so (at least indirectly) by strengthening the informality of both the G8 and the G20. What the EU seems *not* to have done, is use this opportunity to transform the G8 and the G20 into more formalized and/or norm-based institutions, contrary to the wishes of some of its individual member states. Despite the EU's preference for effective multilateralism, formalizing the G's seems not to be in the EU's interest, whose (undefined) position seems to be tied to the informal nature of the summits. The next section assesses whether internal reform has been more successful in the pursuit of either scenario.

## **INTERNAL REFORM: THE EU IN THE G8 BEFORE AND AFTER THE TREATY OF LISBON**

This second section looks at the changes to the EU's representation in the G8 following from the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and what this entailed for the EU's ability to pursue its ambitions within the G8. The prime focus is the extent to which the EU representation is

able to operationalize effective multilateralism in the G8, hence has been able to influence the G8. Given the fact that the G8 is an informal group within which no formal decision-making takes place, our interpretation of influence, or effectiveness, focuses on the ability to take part in the social processes of the summit. We start with a general overview on the EU's specific status within the G8 and how this is related to its (in)ability to pursue effective multilateralism in this forum. Second, we turn to the changes that were implemented under the Treaty of Lisbon. We finish this section by addressing the question of whether the EU manages to either act as an effective 'plate spinner' or to expand and formalize the G8 now the Lisbon Treaty has altered the form of its participation within the G8.

### **The EU's specific status and position in the G8**

While the G8 remains primarily a gathering of heads of state, since 1977, only two years after the first summit in Rambouillet, the EU/EC has been officially represented at every summit. Originally an economic forum, and with efficiency and authority as the main goals of the summit, the need for EU involvement was recognized right from the start. After some internal disagreements on the nature of the representation, the member states compromised on a parallel approach that allowed for the EU to be represented at the summit by the president of the European Commission, as well as the rotating president of the EU Council (alongside the individual EU member states). However, no formal mandate was instated and close oversight mechanisms were installed.

Despite (or perhaps even because of) this precarious starting position, the European Commission was able to establish itself as a nearly fully-fledged participant at the summit table. Although initially restricted to participation in discussions on trade, the Commission was already involved in every aspect of the summit by 1981 (Niemann and Huigens 2011:

426). Also, the various oversight mechanisms fell into disuse (cf. Putnam and Bayne 1987: 153).

While not a sovereign state like the other G8 members, the European Commission is now generally treated like one at the summit. Other G8 members encourage the EU's involvement because of what it can contribute. The Commission delegation participates independently in all components that make up the summit structure, including the on-site and independent ministerial forums and meetings that have grown to be a part of the G8 infrastructure. The EU's performance and compliance, as measured by the G8 Research Group, has been on par with that of other G8 members, suggesting that it has been successful as an autonomous delegate (Huigens and Niemann 2011). The position of the Council Presidency, on the other hand, has been marginal. With a different EU member state joining the summit each year, the Council President tended to join ranks with the Commission, but remained largely excluded from the preparatory process. Also, when represented by a G8 EU member, the position of Council President became a neglected one.

Formally, only two aspects distinguish the EU from other G8 members, namely the exclusion from the name 'G8' and the fact that the EU cannot host a summit. This last aspect is of more value than one may suspect, since the summit hosts play an important part in defining the atmosphere and agenda of the summits. Especially in a setting as informal as the G8, every summit host has the liberty to organize a summit on the terms it prefers. This inability of the EU to organize the summit leaves it devoid of a significant tool to shape the summit in terms of inclusiveness and formalization. On the other hand, individual EU member states have been known to organize more inclusive and outreach-oriented summits, while the Atlantic states tend to focus more on informality and exclusiveness. Thus one may conclude that the radical scenario of effective multilateralism is pursued only in indirect terms.

Proactive EU involvement differs per issue area. This variation is explained by diverging levels of competence as well as by other factors, such as experience, national interests, or international context. As a result the EU is a more effective plate spinner for some issues than for others, despite the fact that the informal nature of the summit makes the issue of whether or not the EU has the competence to speak less stringent. Such issues include climate change and development aid, for which the EU has often attempted to use the G8 summit as a forum to not only foster understanding and promises, but also enforce more formalized international agreements. For example, the EU delegation has repeatedly identified the commitment to emission cuts of 50 per cent by 2050 as a summit objective (see for example Kwok *et al.* 2008: 129). Similarly, on the issue of development aid, the EU has consistently advocated a fixed share of GDP reserved for Official Development Assistance (ODA) (see for example Kwok *et al.* 2008: 131-2). In these attempts to formalize and institutionalize international agreements, which have repeatedly appeared on the EU's list of summit priorities, the goal of effective multilateralism can be identified. However, while a certain extent of plate spinning occurs thanks to these efforts and other more formal initiatives are endorsed and explored, the EU has mostly failed in formalizing agreements at the G8 level. In most cases, the wording of the G8-communiqués is such that extensive liberty is granted to each member state on whether and how to execute the agreements that were made at the summit, which does not align with the aim of effective multilateralism.

In addition, the EU delegation is not completely independent, despite its distinctive infrastructure. This to some extent limits the EU's ability to operationalize effective multilateralism in the G8. The European Commission, unlike individual EU G8 members, must always take into account the positions of the other EU G8 participants, and is therefore less likely to be pressing for the more radical approaches (Putnam and Bayne 1987). Division

among the ranks of the EU members is possible, and the Commission does choose sides, but only after at least one other EU member has expressed support for that side. In contrast, individual member states do not hesitate to act independently. Relating back to the question of effective multilateralism, this makes the EU more of a general *norms chaser* than most other G8 members, who are more focused on the pursuit of interests. The EU is there to offer a broader, more general perspective.

There is neither a coordinated EU position within the G8, nor a formal policy among European delegations on how to deal with diverging goals in the summit. Nevertheless, behind the scenes, coordination does take place occasionally, usually by the Commission, and only when it suits the member states. Still, in terms of output, the four member states and the EU are quite cohesive, since there are few international issues on which the EU states have not already established a common position. However, most G8 members agree that too much EU unity could lead to the polarization within the G8 — the Europeans *versus* the rest — which would be counterproductive. This results in a balancing act between not coming across as divided, and not coming across as a bloc.

An interesting relationship thus exists between these two forms of multilateralism, with the informality of the G8 *enabling* the formalized necessity of EU presence. On the one hand, the transfer of competences from individual member states to the EU level deemed EU participation on some issues not only logical, but even legally necessary. On the other hand, this necessity was facilitated by the informality of the summit, which enabled the EU to participate alongside some but not all individual EU member states. But this same formalized necessity, or the EU agreements that deem EU participation legally mandatory, also made the parallel arrangement inevitable. At the same time, the informal nature of the summit did not only enable the parallel structure, but also encapsulated it through a logic of path dependency



and power politics, in the sense that it is unlikely that the four largest EU member states will give up their G8 seat.

Referring back to the question of how 'effective' the EU is as a participant at the summit, we conclude that the EU is almost a fully-fledged participant at the summit, with its main challenges stemming from its lack of true independence. This limited independence makes it difficult for the EU to pursue the more radical scenario of formalizing the G8. Evidence does exist however, of the EU endorsing the principle of the G8 as a plate spinner, albeit only in certain topic areas. The structure of EU representation has made EU participation somewhat more delicate than that of regular G8 members. At the same time, however, the informality of the summit counterbalances these delicacies. Thus, it seems not so much the setting of 'multilateralism light' that challenges the EU's ability to pursue effective multilateralism, but rather the internal EU arrangements. This begs the question whether recent internal reforms, namely the Treaty of Lisbon, have solved this issue.

### **The influence of the Lisbon Treaty**

Up until 2009, the European Union was represented by the European Commission and the rotating president of the European Council. Under these circumstances only the Commission managed to approximate the status of regular G8 members. The single most important reason for this fact was consistency. In a personalized intimate forum such as the G8, social relations need time to develop. Under such circumstances, the changing face of the Council President was a distinct disadvantage. By the time the Treaty of Lisbon was to be implemented, it was obvious that the representation of the Council would need a different attire.

The Lisbon Treaty solved this issue by instating a permanent President of the European Council. One of the main goals of the Treaty was to make the Common Foreign and Security Policy a more integral part of the EU and to enhance coherence in EU external action generally (Gebhard 2011: 121; Bache *et al.* 2011: 213). The position of the permanent president of the Council was therefore designed to do just that: manage *coherence*, in terms of organizational unity, and *consistency*, or organizational continuity, by for the first time representing the Council as a self-contained institutional actor (European Union 2008: Article 13.1). Thus, as of 2010, the EU is represented at the summit by both the Commission president and the permanent president of the European Council. The question that is discussed in this final section is how EU representation at the summit changed and the effect of these changes on the aforementioned goals of the Lisbon Treaty.

The practical implication of this change was that a new division of labour developed between the Commission and the Council. The two institutions were to be more tightly connected and form one single EU delegation, with in effect 'two heads'. Since each summit participant is entitled to one sherpa and three sous-sherpas, these positions are crossways divided for both the G20 and the G8. Hence the Commission provides the G20 sherpa and the Council the G8 sherpa, while in return both sherpas act as sous-sherpa in the other forum. Both summit teams are supported by a small Commission-team, which connects the summit input and output to the daily affairs of the Commission DG's. Apart from the expertise input by the Commission, the G8 representation of the Council is first and foremost directed by Van Rompuy's cabinet, and not by specific input from the European Council or its individual members.

This infrastructure is complemented by an informal division of tasks between Van Rompuy and Barroso. In typical G8 fashion, the division of labour is not exactly according to legal competences, but the result of a practical exchange of subjects that are considered relevant

that particular year by one or the other. Competences play a part here, but only indirectly, as the Council President has been more involved in foreign policy issues, such as Syria or Afghanistan, while the Commission focuses on certain other topics that are either an exclusive competence, such as trade, or a so-called 'pet' issue, such as climate change. On some issues both presidents speak, for example because they speak from different angles. Development aid budgets can for instance be a topic on which the representative of the individual EU member states represents a different perspective as the Commission, which has its own aid budget.

What these changes most significantly improved<sup>1</sup>, was the *consistency* of the EU Council delegation, an important determinant for effective participation within the informal setting of the summit. Previous studies have found that leaders with more summit experience tend to perform better, both in terms of interaction and in effectiveness (Kokotsis 2002). Initial disadvantages - that the Council delegation may have had in this respect - were quickly neutralized, due to the fact that the Council team was manned by highly experienced diplomats, who were able to integrate into the G8 network smoothly. Also, through its close cooperation with the Commission, the Council was able to benefit from its lead and experience as well. In relation to its ability to pursue effective multilateralism, this increased continuity enabled the Council to become a more credible and proactive advocate of certain objectives (as opposed to varying, member state specific objectives), testifying to an increased ability to pursue the scenario of plate spinning.

The second goal of the Treaty constituted *cohesion*. Since the Lisbon Treaty added new (and more) actors to represent the EU internationally, increased cohesion was not evident. This was also the case for the G8, in which one reasonably effective EU representative, the Commission, was replaced by two separate EU institutions. Initially, this put fellow G8

members off, who were expecting to encounter a more united EU and instead had to deal with another EU representative. Although this development would thus seem detrimental for cohesion, in practice this does not seem to be the case. Cooperation between the Council and the Commission seems to run smoothly so far, as their interests seem not only to align, but to be similar, as both bodies represent the EU interest. Additionally, the Commission deems cooperation and coordination with the permanent Council president significantly easier than with a different rotating president each year. Officials from non-EU G8 members have confirmed the image of one EU actor. Some of them were not even aware that both institutions were part of the G8, since they only dealt with one (as double representation only takes place at the very highest level).

What has not increased since the Lisbon Treaty is the internal coordination between member states and the EU delegation, both G8 member states and non-G8 member states. Even though Van Rompuy represents the European Council, his position is only indirectly the result of Council deliberations. Thus the position of the EU delegation(s) remains as restricted by certain internal conditions, such as competences and double representation, as it ever was.

Probably the most significant change was an aspect not explicitly envisaged by the Lisbon Treaty: the fact that the EU is now always represented by two people. But it is not merely the strength of numbers, but also that the Council and the Commission bring different angles, which usually complement. Such different perspectives bring different arguments to the table, amplifying its chances of convincing other G8 members.

### **Consequences for the EU's efforts to pursue effective multilateralism**

The above elaboration on the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty begs the question whether increased consistency, and, to a lesser extent, increased cohesion, has boosted the EU's effectiveness in the G8. In fact, the two elements, consistency and cohesion seem to almost work against each other in this context, by adding a consistent new EU representative to the original set up. The ability of the Council to take full part in the summit processes has increased considerably. But at the same time, the Commission now has to share its position as prime EU representative, in effect adding an extra head to the beast. In this light, the EU seems to have done rather well, in its smooth cooperation between the Commission and the Council. Also, in terms of performance as well as compliance, no significant effect of the changes can be detected.

The special position of the European Union as a participant, but not quite an official member, has not altered since the Lisbon reforms and thus not solved the EU's main predicament to the pursuit of effective multilateralism. Two important challenges remain, namely the inability to host a summit, and the parallel structure of having both the EU and four individual member states present. These challenges continue to make it difficult for the EU to pursue effective multilateralism in an informal forum such as the G8. A consistent addition in numbers has probably added to the EU's ability to make the G8 a plate spinner. However, the structure of the representation, with two EU representatives as well as four member states, remains such that more institutionalization is probably not in favour of the EU. Therefore, the conclusion seems to be that in terms of effectiveness, things have not seemed to have regressed, but have not significantly improved either.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter has introduced a fascinating relationship between different interpretations of multilateralism, namely ‘multilateralism light’ and ‘effective multilateralism’. The question explored was if and how the EU balances these multilateralisms through membership in the G8. We have focused our analysis on the EU’s positioning in the debate on G8 reform and on the conditions related to its own specific status within the G8 as well as the reforms in that regard implemented after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

First, we looked at the external reform dimension. Of the two scenarios introduced at the beginning of this chapter, the EU seems to have eschewed transforming the G8 (and the G20) into a more inclusive, formalized or norm-based institution, despite its preference for effective multilateralism. Instead, it has rather worked towards more effective plate-spinning as well as towards potentially more effective cooperation between itself and the G8. The most obvious explanation for this behaviour seems to be that the more radical scenario might possibly have constituted a threat to the EU’s own position at the summit.

Next, we illustrated that the EU’s position in the G8 summit, as a representative that acts in parallel with four individual member states, approximates that of the real G8 members, with two important exceptions. The EU is unable to host a summit, and its position is slightly more formal and less independent than that of other summit members, due to it not being a state. This position prevents the EU from shaping the contours of the summit and thus pursue the more radical scenario of institutionalizing and legitimizing the summit. This restricts the EU to the pursuit of the first scenario, of making the G8 more of a plate spinner. The EU attempts to do this by using the summit as a pusher for its norms-based agenda in certain issue areas, but has only been moderately successful.

Finally, we concluded that the Treaty of Lisbon mainly elevated the position of the European Council, giving it a much more consistent position at the summit. But despite promises made to non-EU summit members, the EU position has not become more unified than it was before. If anything, the group gained a participant. In terms of effectiveness, the main gain for the EU delegation was another integrated member to plead the European case, or effective multilateralism. The somewhat delicate position of the EU, however was not altered through the Lisbon Treaty, thus maintaining the delicate balance between effective multilateralism and multilateralism light for now.

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<sup>1</sup> These results must be considered preliminary, since the new representation structure has only been in place for three consecutive summits. Future research should reveal whether or not the trends that we detect here, have persisted.

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