BKHS Perspectives

From Crisis Manager to Agenda Setter: Policy Recommendations for the G7 from the Next Generation of Leaders

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Key Arguments

#1 The G7 should set the tone for a foreign policy based on democratic values and international cooperation.

#2 Representing democratic values, the G7 should aspire to implement inclusive foreign policies as a first step to widespread gender mainstreaming.

#3 The G7 climate club should secure funding for international climate mitigation and distribute it globally through inclusive and transparent decision-making.

#4 To promote digital democratic discourse, the G7 should proceed against algorithms that create filter bubbles with selective information for users.

#5 The G7 should establish tailored partnerships and review mechanisms to enhance accountability and representation, and thus its overall legitimacy.

#7 The BKHS NextGen7 Summit shows the importance of a holistic approach for the G7 and takes the G7 to a more equal and inclusive path.

#8 The G7, a group of powerful and economically strong nations, should turn the current crisis into an opportunity and become a leading force for global peace.

#9 The G7's media performance is key to use the 2022 summit to demonstrate solidarity between democratic industrialised nations.

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Content

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The G7 from Crisis Manager to Agenda Setter: Recommendations for a Positive Global Agenda

Elisabeth Winter

In 2022, Germany is the holder of the rotating G7 presidency. In its program, the German government has set itself the goal of "progress towards an equitable world". Chancellor Olaf Scholz declared at the beginning of the year: "We will use our presidency to ensure that this group of countries becomes a pioneer. A pioneer for a climate-neutral economy and a just world." The German presidency thus intends to use the G7 not only as a forum for international crisis management, but also to actively help shape international politics in a value-driven way. However, just a few weeks after the theme was announced, the Russian attack on Ukraine began. Russian President Vladimir Putin destroyed peace in Europe and created new geo-strategic realities globally.

Shaping international cooperation now

As international cooperation and globalization are facing major challenges, the G7 can harness its current unity in a targeted manner. By setting a positive agenda, the G7 can draw on the current momentum to define common positions and translate them into practical policies. This applies to the management of immediate crises and complex global tasks, but also to the shaping of international cooperation over the long-term. Indeed, many aspects of the G7 agenda are more pressing than ever: the humanitarian challenges posed by wars worldwide, the implementation of global vaccination justice in the face of pandemics, and the fight against climate change at the global level are just a few examples.

Back in 2014, the G7 defined itself as an alliance of values that stretched beyond economic co-operation. At that time, the seven "leading democracies" reacted to Russia's annexation of Crimea, which was illegal under international law, and expelled Russia from the former G8. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, which began in February 2022, constitutes a violent breach of international law by a former partner and as such lends a new sense of urgency to the future of global cooperation. As an alliance of "economically strong democracies", the G7 can use this opportunity to set the international tone for a foreign policy based on democratic values and international cooperation.

It is all the more important that the G7 not only stands together as partners with shared values, but also implements them. If the G7 wants to increase its legitimacy, its activities, often derided as summit politics, must go beyond mere lip service. To achieve this, the G7 must open up both internally and externally. It must closely involve its own civil societies in decision-making processes and enter into international cooperation with other democracies – and their civil societies.

Policy Recommendations from the Next Generation of Leaders

Since February 24, 2022, the G7 has once again found itself in its familiar role of crisis manager. Tried and tested in this role, the group has reacted quickly and cohesively and imposed sanctions.

But it must remain committed to its original 2022 goal of a more just world. This requires international exchange, the involvement of civil society and fresh ideas. For this reason, we invited eight young people from the G7 countries and Ukraine as a guest country to Helmut Schmidt's home for the **BKHS NextGen7 Summit**, held just a few weeks before the summit in Elmau. Taking up our namesake's idea of a lively discourse in an informal setting, the young representatives spent two days discussing and developing policy recommendations for the topics of climate justice, digital democracy, gender justice and international cooperation beyond the G7.

In a foresight exercise, we developed concrete policy recommendations for the German government built on its main priorities as detailed in its 2022 programme titled "Progress towards an equitable world". As Germany holds the G7 presidency, it currently has a particular opportunity to set the direction for the G7.

We therefore identified concrete policy goals for 2029 – the year when Germany will next hold the G7 presidency – and developed tangible policy recommendations for achieving these goals. Together with renowned think tank experts, we refined the ideas even further. The first issue of our English-language publication **BKHS Perspectives** collates these ideas by including the policy recommendations from our summit participants, invited experts and BKHS colleagues.

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The BKHS NextGen7 Summit participants at the former garden of Loki and Helmut Schmidt.

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Gender and the G7: A Roadmap to Equality

Anna Jacob and Jonathan Ziener

While the advancement of women and girl's rights has been significant, no country is on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5) – gender equality and empowerment for all – by 2030. Beyond protecting human rights, gender equality is essential for economic prosperity as inequalities lead to a reduction in welfare. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted women and girls, exacerbating and re-inforcing structural inequalities based not only on gender, but also on intersectional factors such as race, ethnicity and class. The pandemic has exposed the central role played by the care economy in the smooth functioning of our societies and economies, as well as the chronic under-funding of public care services and gender-responsive social protections.[1]

Unpaid and underpaid care work by women has been filling the gaps while their access to sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) has been deprioritised and even threatened in G7 member countries. A sharp increase in sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women has been observed worldwide and a report by the World Economic Forum concludes that the pandemic has set back progress on gender equality by at least one generation.[2]

Critique of Current Policies: Even the limited progress made on gender equality is under threat due to a lack of sustained policies

The patriarchal organisation of society has left women and gender minorities permanently under-represented in political decision-making processes. Inclusion of these groups is paramount to achieving gender equality.[3] However, progress has been met with a backlash from authoritarian and conservative political agendas, indicating that gender equality is not fully supported by society. Societies worldwide have undergone ideational shifts, resulting in new lifestyles and concepts of family. These changing realities, especially for women and young people, are often unaccounted for by policymakers due to both a lack of representation and available data stratified by gender.[4]

Policy Goal: Adopt sustainable and binding gender equality standards with global impact

On our global path towards gender equality and empowerment for all, we suggest a two-step way forward. First, all G7 member states should adopt an inclusive foreign policy to initiate the implementation of gender mainstreaming within the G7 process and member states. Second, the G7 must establish gender main-streaming as standard practice for G7 processes and members by 2029.

[1]Kristal T. and Yaish M.,Does the coronavirus pandemic level the gender inequality curve? (It doesn't), Res Soc Stratif Mobil, p.68, 2020.
[2]Forum WE, Global Gender Gap Report The Analysis Presented in the Global Gender Gap Report 2021, 2021.
[3]Beer C., Democracy and Gender Equality, Stud Comp Int Dev 44(3):212-227. 2009.
[4]Goetz AM., The New Competition in Multilateral Norm-Setting: Transnational Feminists & the Illiberal Backlash, Daedalus, 149(1):160-179, 2020.

Policy Recommendations

As SDG5 calls on countries worldwide to achieve gender equality, action must be taken immediately. The G7, representing democratic values, should a-o implement inclusive foreign policies as a first step to widespread gender mainstreaming. By doing so, the G7 members could further exemplify successful gender inclusion on the global stage. Japan could serve as a particular model for other East Asian countries where cultural norms may differ from "the West".

#1: Adoption of an inclusive foreign policy

As the first step towards gender mainstreaming by 2029, feminist foreign policies are essential. However, as resistance to gendered language and specific terminology (e.g., 'feminism') grows, we demand the adoption of an inclusive foreign policy by all G7 member states. These policies should be grounded in the 5Rs of the feminist foreign policy framework (see figure).

The German 'progresssive government coalition' ('Fortschrittskoalition') should draw on the momentum created by German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock to push for all G7 members to adopt their own inclusive foreign policies by the end of 2023. The G7 should cooperate with countries which have successfully implemented such policies such as Canada, Sweden and Mexico.

The 5R framework of feminist foreign policy[5, 6]
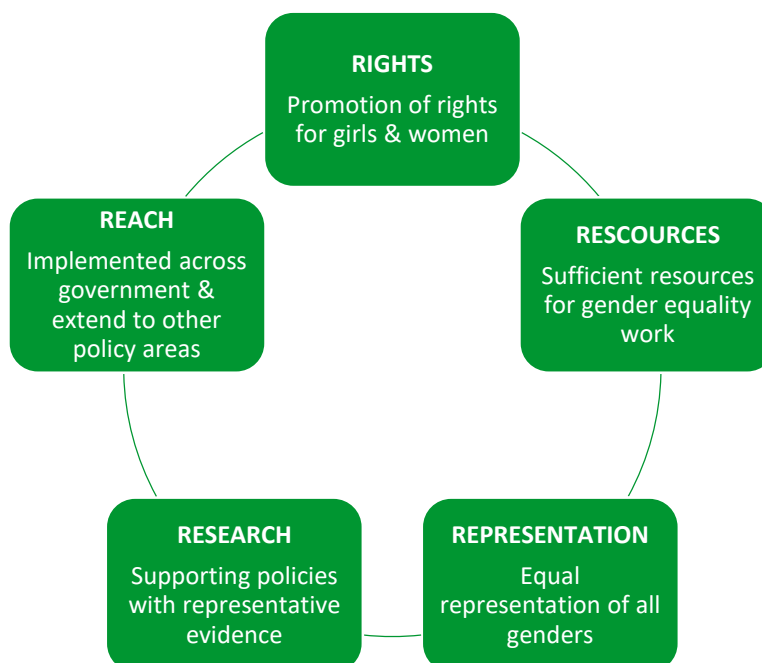
[5]Thomson J., What's Feminist about Feminist Foreign Policy? Sweden's and Canada's Foreign Policy Agendas, Int Stud Perspect, 21(4):424-437, 2020.
[6]Fearon E., The three "r's" of feminist foreign policy, Policy Options, 2017.
[7]Chung H. and van der Lippe T., Flexible Working, Work–Life Balance, and Gender Equality: Introduction, Soc Indic Res, 151(2):365-381, 2020.

#2: Sustainable gender mainstreaming established as standard practice within the G7 process and central governments

Establishing a precedent of gender mainstreaming in foreign policy will serve as a blueprint for other policy areas within the G7. We call for more funding to be allocated to gender-based research projects and data collection from gender minorities to promote scientific, evidence-based policy making. Backsliding due to changing political majorities constitutes a threat and G7 leaders must also invest more resources into gender-sensitive education during the summit. Mandatory women's quotas have been proven to help establish women in leadership positions throughout all levels of policy and prevent reversals. Quotas should be implemented and protected in all G7 countries.

Finally, the gender pay and care gap must also be closed through strict legislation that alleviates the dual burden on women that arises from paid work and unpaid care work. Various pathways could achieve this, such as increasing the minimum wage, providing generous tax benefits to families and introducing affordable childcare.[7]

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[5]Thomson J., What's Feminist about Feminist Foreign Policy? Sweden's and Canada's Foreign Policy Agendas, Int Stud Perspect, 21(4):424-437, 2020.
[6]Fearon E., The three "r's" of feminist foreign policy, Policy Options, 2017.
[7]Chung H. and van der Lippe T., Flexible Working, Work–Life Balance, and Gender Equality: Introduction, Soc Indic Res, 151(2):365-381, 2020.

The G7 Climate Responsibility: The Climate Club as a Tool for a Global and Just Green Transition

Morris Ben Reinmüller and Olena Taran

The debate over energy independence and security in the wake of Russia's war against Ukraine has only underlined the need to build carbon-neutral economies. The discussion also dovetails with the introduction of a climate club as the flagship project of Germany's G7 presidency. While an additional forum for co-operation on climate issues may sound like a welcome project, the new club risks becoming an exclusive undertaking by rich nations that excludes the most affected communities in the Global South.

Therefore, we propose that the climate club initiated by the G7 should focus on issues that the nations of the Global North are primarily responsible for solving. Given that it accounts for more than half of historic global emissions (when including the EU, see also figure on next page), the G7 has a special responsibility to ensure the transition to a carbon-neutral global economy that benefits people all over the world, especially in the Global South where the consequences of climate change are particularly dire.

Policy goal: The G7's climate club as a tool for global climate justice

By 2029, when Germany will next hold the G7 presidency, the aim is for the climate club to have become a forum that advances global climate justice. The idea is to ensure sufficient and reliable climate finance in countries of the Global South

and to introduce an inclusive mechanism to distribute these funds. Establishing a justly distributed and reliable source of finance from G7 members and other industrialised countries for communities impacted the most by the climate crisis is crucial for meeting the 1.5-degree target set in the legally-binding Paris Agreement.

Critique of current policies: Shortcomings of international climate finance undermine climate justice

Insufficient climate financing is available for countries of the Global South which prevents a just green transition around the world. Due to the lack of binding accountability mechanisms, the goal set by industrialised countries of mobilising $US100 billion annually in climate finance has not been reached to date.[1]

And even if this spending target was met, the funds would not be enough to achieve the 1.5-degree goal because this level is based on the commitment to a 2-degree target. Furthermore, what governments of industrialised countries deem to be climate finance is often unclear, as there is a lack of transparency in spending. Some wealthy nations also include loans or general development projects as climate finance, thereby presenting numbers that have little impact on the ground.

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[1] G7 Climate, Energy and Environment Ministers' Communiqué, paragraph 52, May 27, 2022. OECD, Climate Finance Provided and Mobilised by Developed Countries: Aggregate Trends Updated with 2019 Data, 2019.

As the largest share of the money is spent bilaterally, developed countries can decide independently how climate funds are allocated. Affected communities in the Global South are frequently unable to influence these decisions.

Policy recommendations

To address these problems, we propose that the climate club initiated by the German G7 presidency ensures sufficient climate finance is generated by using revenue from carbon pricing and carbon border adjustment mechanisms. In addition, the climate club should initiate the creation of an inclusive forum that decides upon and oversees the distribution of the funds.

#1: Use of carbon pricing and carbon border adjustment revenues for international climate finance

We welcome the recent commitment by G7 climate, energy and environment ministers to mobilise sufficient financing for a climate-neutral world. To ensure the target is actually met this time, international climate finance should be linked to the goal of the German G7 presidency of creating a harmonised system of carbon pricing and carbon border adjustment mechanisms. We recommend spending the vast majority of revenue generated by carbon prices and border adjustment charges on climate projects in countries of the Global South.

Who has contributed most to global CO_2 emissions?
Cumulative carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions over the period from 1751 to 2017.[2]
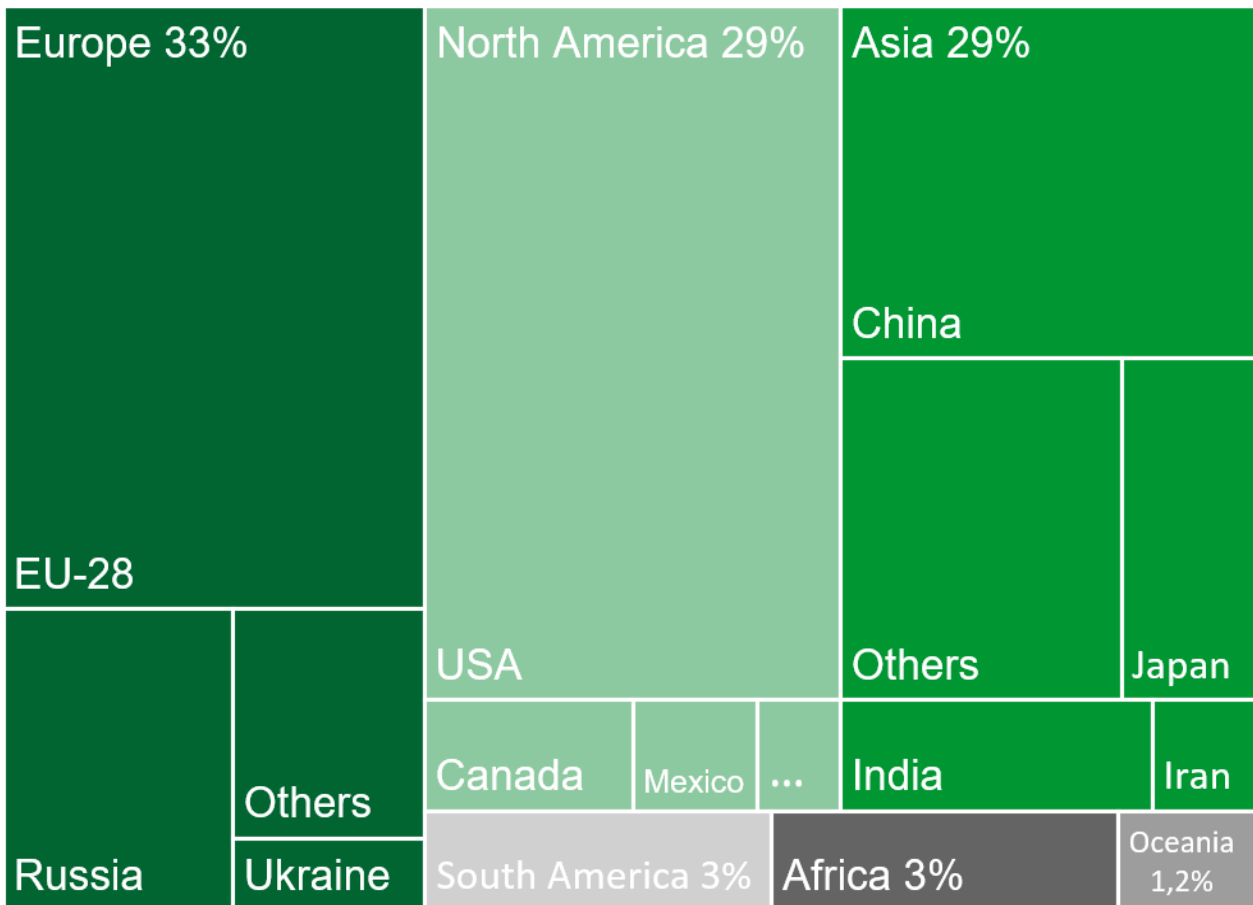
[2] Ritchie H., Who has contributed most to global CO2 emissions? Our World in Data, 2019.

Germany, together with France, Italy and the European Commission, could set an example for the G7 this year by proposing that a majority of the revenue from the EU's carbon pricing system and its innovative carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM) must legally be spent on climate projects in the Global South.

#2: Creation of an inclusive global forum to distribute the climate funds

While raising sufficient funds is a task a climate club of wealthy nations can and should work on mostly by itself due to historic responsibilities, how the money is spent should be decided in an inclusive way that goes beyond the Global North. Therefore, we propose that the climate club initiated by the G7 should help to establish a global, inclusive and transparent forum of government and civil society representatives from both the Global South and the Global North that decides upon and controls the spending of climate funds.

Such a mechanism would not only increase the inclusive-ness of decisions, it would also provide greater transparency about individual countries' contributions to international climate finance. To make the forum relevant G7 members – and especially Germany given that it holds the presidency – should set an example for other countries of the Global North by making all of their international climate spending available to this fund.

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Rethinking the Digital Environment: Algorithms and Digital Democracy

Lok Hang Abraham Chan and Florine Hénault

Social media has become an indispensable space for the G7 population. In fact, on average, each person spends 2 hours and 27 minutes a day on social media or 6 years and 8 months over a lifetime.[1] G7 economies have much higher active social network penetration than the international average of 58.4%, ranging from Italy's 71.6% to Canada's 87.1%.[2] Social media functions via algorithms. The networks expose users to selected information only and confine them to what are called 'filter bubbles'.

An algorithm is constructed by each platform to customise information for each user in order to increase the time he or she spends using the service. The information displayed to users is selected based on popularity and proximity for a particular individual. Consequently, the experience on social media turns into a filter bubble in which users are only offered information of which they are in favour. This polarises the internet community to the edges of the political spectrum and causes disillusion and mistrust within political infrastructure. It is therefore alarming that algorithms are threaten-ing to tear the G7 democracies apart.

Policy goal: Making algorithms fit for digital democracy

The exposure of users to diverse viewpoints on social media is crucial for avoiding politically polarised societies and for achieving digital democracy. To mitigate the consequences of algorithm-generated filter bubbles which expose users only to certain information, the G7 should engage more with different civil society actors to raise public awareness and alter corporate algorithms. Additionally, it should develop its policies by continuously evaluating the digital standards of the G7 and creating a joint legal mechanism to regulate the algorithms of social media.

Filter Bubble
"A filter bubble is your own personal, unique universe of information that you live in online [...] what's in your filter bubble depends on who you are and it depends on what you do. But the thing is that you don't decide what gets in. And more importantly, you don't actually see what gets edited out."
Eli Pariser, 2011[3]

[1] Broadband Search, Avergage Time Spent Daily on Social Media, 2022.
[2] We Are Social; Data Reportal; Hootsuite, Digital 2022: Global digital overview, p. 92, January 2022.
[3] Pariser E., Beware online "filter bubbles, TED Conference, 2011.

Critique of current policies: The G7's belated digital strategy fails to address algorithms

To date, G7 efforts to strengthen digital democracy have barely emerged and are not fast, robust or collaborative enough. The G7 2021 Summit Communiqué stipulates that G7 countries 'will work together toward […] a values-driven digital ecosystem'. Promotion of digital literacy and regulation of the digital space globally are part of the G7's digital strategy.

However, these strategies are still in the early stages of discussion and implementation. Moreover, they do not address the impact of algorithms on users' consumption of information, igno--ring a key cause of democratic fracture.

Policy recommendations

The G7 economies are the biggest source of revenue for social media platforms. The United States, Canada and Europe made up 71.2% of the total revenue of Meta[4], the parent company of Facebook and Instagram. For Twitter, 69.1% of its revenue came from the United States and Japan.[5] This economic significance equips G7 economies with strong bargaining power in regulating platforms and their algorithms. Seen in this light, G7 policy development could shape the design of social media, promote norms that secure social cohesion and, by 2029, even establish legally-binding regulations.

#1: Engage with civil society to raise public awareness about algorithms and encourage digital platforms to alter their algorithm designs

It is essential to inform citizens about the role algorithms play in shaping their social media environment and isolating them from a range of information. Education could be provided to two audiences: students and the general public. Educating students would prepare them for the fast-changing digital environment, while people who are not part of the formal education system could be educated through advertising, different local, regional or international organisations, along with other methods.

Moreover, the G7 should engage with those who write the algorithms: corporations. One method to incentivise social media companies to change the algorithms behind their business model is to use non-legal mechanisms. Since a change in the algorithm to incorporate more opposing viewpoints could reduce the revenue of these providers, generating competition between them to achieve 'digital democracy' could be considered. This could be achieved through financial incentives such as tax abatement and low-interest financing. Another enticement could be an award system.

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[4] Meta, Meta Earnings Presentation Q4 2021, p.10, 2021.
[5] United States Securities and Exchange Commission, Twitter Fiscal Year Annual Report, p.74, 2021.

#2: Continuous evaluation of digital standards at G7 level and implementation of a joint legal mechanism to regulate the algorithms of social media

Technological advancement has been progressing at a rapid pace. Frequent evaluations are therefore needed to provide the most effective responses to digital development. The sharing of policy experience is equally crucial. Presenting a country's achievements and barriers helps to prepare others to develop and implement their strategies. G7 digital ministers should therefore deepen the regular mutual consultations that are already taking place so as to ensure alignment of digital standards and the future implementation of joint regulations.

A joint effort by the G7 would be an efficient way of advancing changes to social media platforms. Since regulation as such would place an additional burden on the operations of social media companies, only a joint initiative by G7 members and the European Union (EU) would be an efficient way to effect change. This is even more true when considering these are the countries generating most of the revenues for these big tech companies. The Digital Services Act of the EU which 'establishes accountability standards for online platforms regarding illegal and harmful content' could serve as an example for G7 member states when drafting their own national legislation or, even better, as the basis for a joint multilateral agreement.

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[4] Meta, Meta Earnings Presentation Q4 2021, p.10, 2021.
[5] United States Securities and Exchange Commission, Twitter Fiscal Year Annual Report, p.74, 2021.

Establishing Inclusive Accountability Within and Beyond the G7

Amber Crossen and Corrado Chirico

The G7 has long been a powerful international forum, playing a critical role in everything from cutting trade barriers to improving multilateral co-operation. But global challenges are bigger than the G7. Today, the forum represents less than 10% of the global population and its economies make up only 30% of global GDP (2020).[1] Not only is the G7's low level of economic and demographic representativeness striking, so is its geographical and cultural exclusivity as a mostly "Western" body. The transnational nature of the current crisis, however, requires efforts that go beyond obsolete political and geographical categories.

Today's challenges require the G7 to rethink its inner workings as well as its role in an ever-changing global landscape. The G7 therefore needs to initiate a reform process guided by the conviction that trust in this institution will only be restored if it is once again able to be perceived not as a top-down endeavor, but as an inclusive platform that is receptive to people's needs and demands. Improvements in representativeness and account-tability are therefore key.

Critique of current policies: G7 policy falls short of its own core principles

The current policy aimed at ensuring accountability is implemented via the Accountability Working Group (AWG).[2] This group consists of representatives from only G7 nations, which measure progress using a set of eight indicators agreed by the AWG.

There is no input from nations outside of the G7 forum. Moreover, not all commitments are reviewed. A G7 commitment is only followed up through this accountability framework if it is deemed "development-related", which further limits the review of the G7's progress and the impact on certain goals.[4] If commitments and goals are not achieved in a timely manner or never come to fruition, there is no accountability on the part of G7 states; the AWG only provides review. Additionally, there is a lack of transparency about participants in the AWG and the group's resulting impact.

Accountability Working Group (AWG)
The Accountability Working Group (AWG) has the task of reviewing the implementation status of the current G7 commitments. At the 2007 Summit in Heiligendamm, Germany, members introduced the idea of building a system of accountability and the mechanism was formally launched in 2009. The main task of the AWG is to publish an Account-ability Report which presents a comprehensive re-view and monitoring of the G7 commitments every three years.[3]

[1] The Council on Foreign Relations, Where Is the G7 Headed?, June 14, 2021.
[2] G7 Carbis Bay Progress Report. 2021.
[3] ibid.
[4] Fischer R., How the G7 Reviews its Work on Development: A Case Study of Internal Accountability, German Development Institute, 2020.

But the G7 not only lacks accountability, it also fails to apply inclusive agenda setting.

In this respect, the G7 has been falling short not just in terms of its accountability principles, but also of its commitment to inclusivity. While the recent G7 Foreign Ministers' Communiqué highlights the G7's commitment to a globally inclusive approach, there has been a historical lack of inclusivity in regard to how commitments and agendas are set, the Heiligendamm Process being one example. While the initiative sought to institutionalise high-level dialogue between the then G7 and the five most important emerging economies, known as the O5, there was not a true long-term commitment to the process as it had only a two-year life-span.[5] Still, dialogues beyond the G7, such as the Heiligendamm Process, are focused on themes set by the G7 presidency, not non-G7 nations.[6]

Policy goal: More representation and accountability within and beyond the G7

Accountability and representation are critical to improving the forum's legitimacy. For too long the G7 has been dependent on the "goodwill" of leaders. Increased political volatility and fragmentation have threatened to undermine each state's commitment to multilateralism and active participation within the forum. The absence of firm accountability to a body outside of the G7, paired with a lack of inclusive agenda setting, adds up to a lack of buy-in to the G7's agenda. This applies not only to nations outside of the group, but also to the general public, as previously published criticism has demonstrated. It is time that the G7 position itself as an inclusive body that establishes global partnerships, strategies and solutions.

Policy recommendations

Earlier G7 summits have already served as vivid examples of how swiftly cooperation within such informal fora can dwindle. And phenomena such as democratic backsliding and populism have only exacerbated some of the G7's underlying weaknesses. We therefore recommend improving representation by increasing cooperation with civil society and other regions of the world and enhancing accountability with a new mechanism.

#1: More tailored cooperation

The G7 should significantly expand its cooperation, both with bodies serving as feedback platforms and with other international organisations. This kind of collaboration should ensure that inputs from civil society and stakeholders are constantly included in G7 deliberations both before and after a summit. For instance, the role of groups such as Women 7, Civil Society 7 and Labor 7 should not be limited exclusively to the pre-summit process, but should also entail subsequent evaluation.

At the same time, meaningful partnerships with regional organisations will also be key to broadening the G7's reach and turning it into a truly global forum. Drawing upon frameworks that already exist and taking account of major demographic and economic developments, the group should shore up its cooperation with ECOWAS and ASEAN.[7] There is also a need to strengthen the G7's role within UN-led processes.

The group´s interactions with other regions of the world should cease to be merely ritual events surrounded by an aura of exclusivity. Instead, they should be issue-based and mindful of local needs and demands.

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[5] Fues T.,Le Pere G., Leininger J. and Riestra M.,The Heiligendamm Process and Emerging Powers: More of the Same or a Genuine Global Governance Innovation? Cambridge University Press, March 05, 2012.
[6] Fischer R., How the G7 Reviews its Work on Development: A Case Study of Internal Accountability,German Development Institute, 2020.
[7] Federal Foreign Office, Speech by Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock at the conference "Sustaining Peace amidst the Climate Crisis", May 02, 2022.

#2 Exploring and Implementing a New Accountability Mechanism

The G7 should reevaluate the AWG and establish an accountability mechanism that truly provides oversight on how commitments are made and evaluated and can contribute to how the G7's agenda is set. This will require an exploration of different models, but there is no shortage of inspiration.

Public–private partnerships have long resulted in innovative projects and approaches and the G7 nations could look to accountability board mechanisms found in government and corporate spheres. Going a step further, the G7 should look to not only establish a new mechanism but also ensure that the individuals that make up the accountability group come from a variety of countries outside of the G7 nations. The G7 would then be held accountable by this external body. Including non-G7 nations in this mechanism on a permanent basis would not only provide a differing set of perspectives, it would also hold the potential to rebuild trust, reestablish relevance and put the G7 on the path to achieving its commitments.

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The BKHS NextGen7 Summit…

Statements by Julia Kloiber and Rachel Tausendfreund

… shows the importance of a holistic approach for the G7

Julia Kloiber

It was a truly unique experience to spend the afternoon in Helmut and Loki Schmidt's empty pool, listening to young policymakers representing G7 nations and Ukraine present their proposals for a more equal and sustainable world. The participants covered digital, gender and environmental policy and also explained how international co-operation could function beyond the G7. The conversations increasingly showed how all of these issues are intertwined; we will not be able to overcome the challenges without acknowledging the strong linkages between them. One example is the internet's carbon footprint, which accounts for over 2 percent of global carbon emissions. This environmental dimension of digital technology needs to be included in technology regulation and policymaking. We need to understand the root causes of problems in order to address them. Social media platforms exacerbate the polarisation and bias that exists in our societies. Fixing the algorithms is crucial, but it won't fix racist, misogynist and extremist tendencies in communities. These issues need to be tackled in a holistic way – rights-centered technology policy-making can only be one of several dimensions we need to consider.

Julia Kloiber

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… takes the G7 to a more equal and inclusive path

Rachel Tausendfreund

"Progress towards an equitable world" is the goal Germany has set for its G7 presidency. The BKHS NextGen7 Summit participants took this motto seriously and expanded upon it in their ideas for future-focused recommendations for the G7. Equity and justice beyond the G7 countries were clear themes of all four focus areas, including digital, which is a clear sign of how the world has been transformed since six Western leaders met informally in 1975 at the invitation of French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt.

About 50 years ago, informal cooperation to address global economic challenges was a progressive idea. Since then, the group has expanded its membership (just slightly) and widened its agenda beyond economics to issues such as HIV, climate, and now, more global equity. Ideas of equity and inclusion in member countries have also shifted and broadened since the early days, as the NextGen7 topics indicate.

The G7 is a forum that is fundamentally based on inequity, an exclusive club of the richest and most powerful. This is perhaps why it is all the more important that members demand from themselves a focus on global equity and inclusion.

Looking beyond economic inequality, the BKHS NextGen7 participants selected key areas that will determine how much progress the world will make toward a fairer future. Climate justice, one of the policy issues selected, is important not only for generational equity but also for a fairer global climate transition. Focusing on gender inclusion both within G7 societies and globally will help to improve equity within and among societies – even if it does not solve all inequality problems. According to the 2021 Shecurity report[1], G20 countries are still 37 years away from achieving gender equality in terms of political representation.

Better access to a better digital commons is another key policy problem identified by participants. Here the issue is not only access to the digital world, but doing more to create a better digital space, one that connects and informs, rather than divides and inflames. The G7 members are indispensable leaders especially when it comes to this issue, given that they govern over the tech giants shaping the digital future. More governing will be necessary here.

Finally, global accountability rounds out the BKHS NextGen7 policy agenda. It will take innovative thinking and sustained pressure to make the G7 accountable not only to their own populations, but to everyone not at the table.

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Impressions from the BKHS NextGen7 Summit at the former house of Loki and Helmut Schmidt.

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[1]Shecurity. Index 2021.

Taking Action for Peace as an Investment in a Better Future – in Ukraine and Beyond

Dr. Julia Strasheim

The leaders of G7 nations are meeting in Elmau at a watershed moment for international peace and security. Russia's war against Ukraine has fundamentally changed previous geopolitical realities and the European peace order. The brunt of this upheaval is being borne by Ukrainians. Since the invasion began on 24 February, observers have documented widespread violence against civilians by Russian troops, including executions, torture, sexualised violence and rape; the bombing of residential areas, schools and hospitals; the destruction of water and electricity supplies; and the use of particularly brutal weapons, such as cluster munitions.

Both the immediate and long-term implications of this war, however, extend far beyond Ukraine. Neighbouring countries received over four million refugees from Ukraine in the first five weeks of the war alone. G7 nations have imposed unprecedented sanctions on Russia while trying to ensure energy security at home. And already, experts warn that soaring food prices sparked by the war will have dramatic consequences on a global scale as a result of worsening food shortages in Africa and the Middle East and exacerbating conflicts and insecurity in the long run.

Critique of current policies: Global peace and peacebuilding expenditures in decline

Peace did not play a prominent role in the list of policy priorities from the German G7 Presidency as presented in January 2022. In fact, the 12-page document outlining the program mentions "peace" only twice.[1] This is at least somewhat surprising, as peace was deteriorating globally and policies to prevent and resolve armed conflict were failing long before Russia's war. For instance, the *Uppsala Conflict Data Program* counted 56 armed conflicts in 2020. This was the highest annual number recorded since 1945, showing that the call for a global ceasefire during the COVID-19 pandemic had "failed to produce any results".[2] Estimating the costs of this failure, the *Global Peace Index* found that the economic impact of violence was $US14.96 trillion in 2020, "equivalent to 11.6 per cent of global GDP or $1,942 per person", while only $US56.3 billion were spent on peacebuilding that same year – a 10.2 per cent drop since 2007.[3]

[1] G7 Germany, Policy Priorities for Germany's G7 Presidency in 2022, 2022.
[2] Pettersson T. et al., Organized violence 1989-2020, with a special emphasis on Syria, Journal of Peace Research 58(4), 809-825, 2021.
[3] Institute for Economics and Peace, Global Peace Index 2021, 2021.

Policy goal: Become a leading force for peace – in Ukraine and beyond

As an alliance of powerful and economically strong nations, bound by shared values of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, the G7 should turn the current crisis into an opportunity. By 2029, when Germany will next hold the G7 presidency, the group should have substantially strengthened its role and have become a leading force for global peace.

Policy recommendations

To this end, G7 leaders should commit to taking steps in two main areas:

#1: Recognise that peace, security and development complement each other

All eyes are currently on Ukraine. Russia's war has understandably led a string of countries to promise further increases in military budgets which had already been at a record high in 2021.[4] But to ensure support for the long-term economic and social reconstruction of Ukraine, to alleviate the global impact of Russia's war and to address the more widespread global decline of peace, increased military spending cannot come at the expense of a further decline in Official Development Assistance (ODA), especially when it comes to peacebuilding expenditures.

For this reason, all G7 nations should commit to increasing ODA expenditures to meet the 0.7% ODA/GNI target (which, to date has only been met by Germany). But at the same time, members also urgently need to earmark long-term support for peacebuilding investments in their budgets, particularly for reconciliation measures, strengthening

the inclusion of marginalized groups in post-conflict societies, reforming security sectors and justice systems and involving local civil society actors in peace processes.

#2: Make involving civil society the cornerstone of further action in Ukraine

The G7 leaders are meeting in Elmau four months after the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and eight years after expelling Russia from the club following its illegal annexation of Crimea. They should use this platform, their power and their unity to give finding solutions for the war new impetus.

For instance, G7 leaders should use their forum to outline concrete and tangible steps on how the perpetrators of war crimes will be held accountable internationally. Furthermore, if credible negotiations for a ceasefire or a permanent solution to the war take place in the future, G7 leaders should use their power and push for civil society to be given a seat at the table in these talks. Studies show that this is both effective in avoiding a breakdown of negotiated deals – and that Ukrainians themselves support this participation.[5]

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[4] SIPRI, World military expenditure passes $2 trillion for first time, 2021.
[5] Nilsson D., Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace, International Interactions 38(2), 243-266, 2012. Nordås R. et al., Ukrainian Women Engage in Resistance and Should Be in the Peace Talks: New Survey Evidence, 2021.

Living Up to its DNA: Media Performance as a G7 Policy Tool

Dorothée Falkenberg and Merle Strunk

Summits are always a media ritual for all sides. They provide an opportunity for staging, self-promotion, protest and political show. Media performance is a more effective policy tool than is commonly thought – if done right. So far, most political imagery in 2022 has been dominated by the war in Ukraine launched by Russian President Vladimir Putin. The G7 summit in Elmau presents an opportunity to send very different pictures around the world: images of political unity among democracies.

By co-initiating an informal world economic summit in the crisis-driven 1970s, Helmut Schmidt sought to circumvent bureaucratic hurdles and facilitate frank conversation between the leading statesmen of the "Western" world. To Schmidt, the message these gatherings sent to the outside world was just as important as the informal discussions them-selves. The Chancellor and U.S. President Gerald Ford agreed that a summit meeting "must be a de-monstration of solidarity".[1] Schmidt attached great importance to the psychological impact of the events. "This was more important than what could actually be done," the notes say.[2] The question is thus not whether the G7 should be a media event: it is in its DNA. The question is how it is implemen-ted.
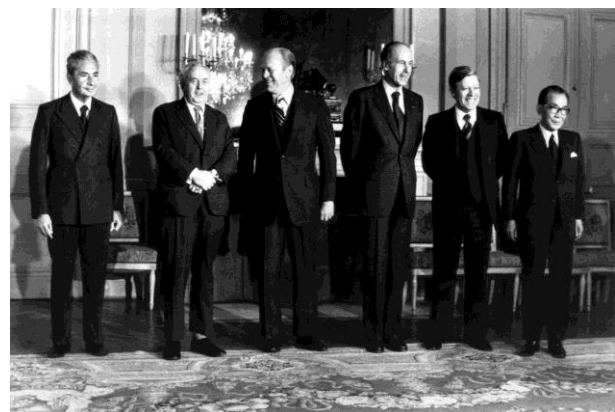
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Government leaders in formal suits pose against a stately backdrop. This is an image that may have seemed modern for the very first summit in 1975 but today it has almost been forgotten by the outside world.

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A picture taken decades later. Leaders decide to take a classy group photo in the pandemic year of 2021. No symbols, just distance. Will this picture still be remembered in a decade?

[1] AAPD, Dok. 222, p. 1037,1975.
[2] AAPD, Dok. 222, p. 1036f., 1975.
[3] Cf. Groebel J. et al., Bericht zur Lage des Fernsehens, p. 146 f., 1995. Meyer T., Mediokratie. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Demokratie?, Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte (B15-16/2002), p.7-14, 2002.

Almost 50 years after the first meeting, a war was launched by former summit participant Vladimir Putin (the G8 existed from 2007 to 2014) against democratic Ukraine. At no G7 summit has Schmidt's original intention to demonstrate solidarity between democratic industrialized nations been more important than at this one in 2022.

This year's G7 Summit certainly provides a window of opportunity for the group's members to position themselves in this regard. Thousands of journalists will be present, who will always be in search of a meaningful message and the best picture.

Criticism of the current approach to media performance

As the discourse around "media democracy" gained momentum in the late 1990s, the influence of the mass media was often viewed critically.[3] But regardless of how one evaluates the media's influence on politics, there is no denying that it is of great importance: media performance matters.

Against this backdrop, it is disappointing that despite the intense media coverage of the G7 summit over recent decades, only a few images remain in our memory.

Most images are a simple line-up of government leaders, sometimes waving, sometimes on a podium, sometimes on the lawn, but always distant.

A positive example that many remember are the pictures of Angela Merkel and Barack Obama in 2015 in Elmau. Merkel with open arms, Obama in casual pose in front of idyllic alpine panorama. The pair conveys partnership and trust.

The picture of Merkel leaning over Trump was also of great symbolic importance. The common theme of the images is the fact that they are snapshots that convey emotions. They were certainly not free of staging, but the images remained in our memories.

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Angela Merkel and Barack Obama at the G7 Gipfel 2015 in Elmau.

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Angela Merkel and Donald Trump at the G7 Gipfel 2021 in Cornwall.

Policy Recommendations

To do justice to the special significance of the political unity of the G7 this year, we have two essential policy recommendations for the G7's media performance. One relates to the message the pictures send towards the different target audiences, i.e. G7 citizens & opponents, and one concerns the practical use of pictures itself.

#1 Creating memorable images for different target audiences

To reach the broader public, more personal and emotional gestures are needed. Buzzwords like "solidarity" and "unity" in a summit's final declaration probably say much less to people than a hug or the holding of hands between heads of state who want to end a war. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the participants are a collection of the richest countries in the world. Even if the meeting takes place in a castle, representatives should try to remain "down-to-earth" and open to the views of citizens.

Furthermore, it needs to be remembered that the photos are also directed at the political opponent, who is not participating but is certainly watching. Here it is crucial to demonstrate power in a way that differs from the approach taken by autocrats. As a group of democracies the G7 could demonstrate strength by showing unity rather than military convoys.

#2 Do not underestimate the power of images

This year in particular, an image is certainly not "more important than what can actually be done". But we are experiencing a war in an interconnected world. It is also being waged in the media and is therefore also a war of images. The flood of images on social media has not led to them being exploited less. On the contrary, their importance is growing every day. The algorithms of the big media platforms promote this process and our viewing habits adapt to it.

In other words, images are agents: once released into the world they unleash tremendous power and their own dynamics. They spread rapidly, outlast the immediate period in which they were taken and they serve to bind the heads of government because they create public pressure and remind us of what decisions and promises have been made. It is the images that remain. G7 heads of state and government should help to live up to the significance of their images.

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