

## Group of Eight (G8)

### Origin and Development

The origin of the Group can be traced back to November 1975 when the then President of France, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, and the German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, invited the US, Britain, Italy, and Japan for a meeting at the Chateau of Rambouillet, France, to discuss the economic crisis resulting from the rise of oil prices. Another member, Canada, attended the meet in June 1976 held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and as an outcome, the Group of Seven (G-7) was formally created. The G-7 became an international forum for discussing various issues like economic growth, inflation, unemployment, trade ailments, and other problems confronted by the developed nations. It later began to discuss political issues also.

The third G7 summit in May 1977 in London saw the participation of the President of the European Commission also. At the 20th G-7 summit, held in Naples, Italy, in July 1997, at summit in Denver, the US, Russia became a full-fledged member, and the G-7 was renamed as the Group of Eight (G-8) or the Group of Seven plus One (G-7 + 1). Russia, however, participates only in political deliberations, and it does not have a say in economic matters.

### Objectives

The Group aims at deliberating on and evolving strategies to deal with the major economic and political international issues.

### Structure

There is no formal institutional structure. Summits of Heads of State and Government of member-countries and representatives of the [European Union](#) are held annually to discuss issues within the competence of G-7 + 1. The 1986 Summit decided that the Finance Minister of the G-7 work regularly in periods between the annual summit meetings and report to the summits. Senior officials from foreign and economic affairs ministries are responsible for preparing the agenda for the Group.

### The Rise OF Group of Eight (G8)

Since 1990, the G8 has become the de facto centre of 'global governance', unseating the UN as the steering organ in the management of the world's problems. While not everyone agrees with this assessment, it is undeniable that the group's relative importance has increased sharply since the [Cold War](#).

The rise in the relevance of the G7/G8 was not instantaneous. Indeed, the G7 did not perform particularly well in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. Declarations of good intentions were not always followed by concrete action, and, when they were, as in the case of the provision of aid to Russia, the results were not exactly what was expected. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher captured the mood when she quipped that the 1989 'Summit of the Arch' in Paris had served the best meal she had ever had, not otherwise 'little of note was achieved'. Meals and photo opportunities, though, were not the full story. Behind the inflated rhetoric, serious attention was given to ways of reforming the workings of the group.

To the surprise of many observers, the G7/G8 actually managed to reinvent itself in the 1990s. In addition to changing the focus of its agenda (economic to global issues) and inviting Russia to be a new member, the group developed contacts with [United Nations](#) agencies, governments and NGOs. As such, it became a leading example of what is sometimes referred to as a 'public-policy network'.

The idea behind a public-policy network is that no international institution is capable of tackling global problems on its own. What is needed as an association of governments, international organisations, corporations, non-governmental institutions and experts? In order to end the war in Kosovo, for example, the G8 worked with the EU, [NATO](#), the OSCE and the UN, as well as with the foreign ministers of member states and a few key individuals. It is possible and even likely that the G8 will continue to mobilise these networks and to use the assets of its resourceful members in situations where traditional approaches are not yielding results.

The second reason for the G8's high profile was the perceived weakness of the UN, especially in the area of international peace and security. The highly publicised failings of [UN peacekeeping](#) operations in Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Somalia, and the Security Council's inability to reach a common position on Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, opened the door for the Contact Group and the G8. Both of these actors engage in the traditional art of concert diplomacy. In other words, they practice policy coordination outside of formal international organisations. In the previous chapter, a basic distinction was made between them: the G8 represents a form of institutionalised concert diplomacy with a global remit, while the Contact Group, is a forum for ad hoc problem-solving. The distinction seems obvious, but it has a crucial impact on our understanding of the crisis-management roles that they can play.

The third reason that explains the G8's increased political status is simply that it is the biggest show around. It is the only forum where leaders of the most powerful nations meet on a regular basis. Even with the absences of China and lack of representation from Africa, South America and South Asia, the group has become the most intensive concentration of political power on earth. In an era of instant communication and unsaturated demand for news, the G8 has been able repeatedly to capture the attention of the world's media. This means that, whether the leaders want it or not, they are able to influence the global agenda.

The rise of the G8 has meant more criticism, however. One of the key problems facing the group is its perceived lack of legitimacy. Several non-members along with the anti-globalisation movement, see the G8 as a directorate of the developed world and doubt whether it has any interest in the plight of the developing world. It is noteworthy that the G8's security role has not been singled out for the protest. This may be due to lack of knowledge concerning its involvement in international peace and security or perhaps, it is a sign of acceptance of such a role. The only related area where there have been expressions of concern is in regard to the relationship between the G8 and the UN Security Council. Plenty of warnings have been issued that the G8 should be careful not to weaken the Security Council's authority by assuming too strong a role in international peace and security.

## Multiple Choice Question

### 1. Consider the following Statements

1. The Group of Eight (G8) was an inter-governmental political forum from 1997 until 2014. It had formed from incorporating the country of Russia into the Group of Seven, or G7, and returned to its previous name after Russia was disinvented in 2014.

2. The Group of 77 (G-77) was founded on 15 June 1964, by 77 non-aligned nations in the “Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Countries” issued at the [United Nations Conference on Trade and Development](#) (UNCTAD)
3. [G-77](#) is headquartered in Basel, Switzerland.
4. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is headquartered in Moscow, Russia

**Choose the correct answer from the below-given options**

- A) All the above-given statements are true.
- B) None of the above given statements are true.
- C) Only Statements 1 and 2 are false.
- D) Only Statements 3 and 4 are false.

Answer: D

**2. The major focus of the 2009 G8 summit was:**

- A) Food
- B) Transportation
- C) Climate Change
- D) Global Security

**Answer A): Food**

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