

The United Nations and the G-20: Ensuring Complementary Efforts

The Stanley Foundation's
41st United Nations Issues Conference

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Executive Summary

In little more than a year, the Group of Twenty (G-20) has emerged as a vital summit-level forum for leaders to coordinate international economic policy. The global financial crisis drove home the need for consultations among a wider set of key economic players, more representative of 21st-century realities than the earlier G-8 club of predominantly Western industrialized nations.

This development raises important questions about the future shape of the international system and multilateral cooperation. It is increasingly clear that diplomatic cooperation will be *multi*-multilateral, with an intricate web of intergovernmental forums and mechanisms. If multilateral cooperation is to fulfill its purpose of solving problems and spreading peace and justice around the world, governments and their leaders must mobilize and harmonize the capabilities of the intergovernmental instruments at their disposal.

The Stanley Foundation's 41st United Nations Issues Conference convened some 35 governmental and nongovernmental officials near New York on March 26-28, 2010, to discuss effective collaboration between the United Nations and the G-20 heads-of-state summits and preparatory processes. Participants included UN officials, diplomats from a number of countries, and global governance specialists.

Participants stressed that the United Nations and the G-20 are not and should not be perceived as rivals, even though some suggest they are competing to be the center of global diplomacy. The two are sharply distinct from each other, particularly in the contrast between a treaty-based institution and an informal series of consultations, making for a natural division of labor.

The limited membership of the G-x imposes operational demands for robust consultative links between the G-20 and the remaining "G-172" UN member states. The G-20's informal and largely ad hoc engagement with outside stakeholders raises concerns for those without a seat at the table. While some key G-20 countries have consulted with other UN member states, both in New York and national capitals, participants suggested that such consultations should be more intentional, consistent, and transparent to ensure that the voices of all stakeholders are heard.

Participants suggested UN intersections at the "front end" and "back end" of the G-x process, helping to shape its agenda and assisting with follow-through. For example, they emphasized the analytical capacities of the United Nations and Bretton Woods Institutions staff currently studying the impact of the economic downturn on the world's poorest. The conference discussions suggested a helpful role for "G groupings" in political and policy consensus building. It was noted that small groups within the United Nations often gather to develop policy ideas and proposals, and the Gs are well-suited to perform a catalytic function at the highest level of international leadership.

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Opening Remarks

By Richard H. Stanley

Welcome to the Stanley Foundation's 41st United Nations Issues Conference. Since 1969, this conference series has gathered UN leaders, officials from national capitals, and policy experts from around the world to explore and develop solutions to important global concerns. We seek to host timely, informal, nonattribution opportunities to discuss issues that are under active consideration in the multilateral system. We select our topics for their "ripeness" for constructive progress—issues whose resolution will move us toward a world that is more secure, peaceful, free, and just.

This year's topic, "Ensuring Complementary Efforts Between the G-20 and United Nations," certainly meets these criteria. Both the United Nations and the Group of Twenty are important parts of our global governance system. And increasingly in this 21st century, we are confronted by the necessity of effective global governance to deal with the survival issues of today and the future.

It could not be clearer that the lives and fates of people around the world are tightly intertwined. The 2008-09 financial crisis and resulting downturn have shown how economic shockwaves ripple around the globe and have demonstrated how much of a shared stake we all have in a healthy global economy. The threat of climate change is the ultimate "global commons" problem, because failure to limit and manage this will threaten the ecological balance that sustains life. We have only one natural environment and only one opportunity to get this right. Peace and security issues are also transnational. Nuclear proliferation is one example. If nuclear materials are not safeguarded and controlled, or if more new countries acquire nuclear weapons, the underlying norm against proliferation will be eroded. The probability of use of this type of weapon of mass destruction and the resulting consequences will increase. The list of global survival issues goes on and on. Development, population, migration, food supply, water, disease, international crime, drugs, human rights, terrorism, and many others are all a part of humanity's common future. The challenge is to act for the long term, finding durable solutions for future generations rather than band-aid remedies for today.

The common denominator of these concerns is that they require multilateral solutions. Their resolution is beyond the capacity of any one nation or any small group of nations. They demand effective global governance.

The world's global governance system is founded on nation-states. It includes large numbers of intergovernmental organizations, or IGOs, with varied compositions, structures, and purposes. In a sense, global governance has its own kind of "biodiversity."



*Richard H. Stanley, Chair
The Stanley Foundation*

For those of us here this evening, this biodiversity is a familiar reality, but take a minute to consider it. We have global, regional, and subregional forums—including bodies with overlapping memberships, particularly in Asia. There are specialized agencies, funds, and programs to provide direct services to populations or technical support to governments. International financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund and The World Bank, channel resources for financial stability and economic development. We have international juridical bodies and human rights mechanisms to hold governments and individuals to account, and a World Trade Organization to uphold the principles of the global trade system. Intergovernmental committees and treaty organizations deal with their particular sectors and functions.

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And beyond this IGO diversity, transnational businesses, with their linkages and associations, as well as an increasingly robust civil society, are also involved and influential in global governance.

All of these instruments of international cooperation have their particular characteristics and comparative advantages. If governments, enterprises, and peoples really synchronized them all, multilateralism would truly show its value for the world and the people in it. The true test of multilateralism is whether it effectively solves problems and spreads peace, security, freedom, and justice to more of the world's people. And to do this, governments, diplomats, leaders, and citizens must mobilize and harmonize the characteristics and capacities of our diverse multilateral system. It seems clear that 21st-century multilateralism will be *multi*-multilateral.

Our focus this weekend, of course, is how to best use, orient, and combine key multilateral instruments so that they are effective in meeting these challenges. For the next two days, we will focus on the relationship between our most classic formal international institution—the UN system, with its well-established and Charter-based decision rules—and the growing importance of informal policy coordination and action in the G groupings.

The G groupings are of comparatively recent origin. The first summit meeting of a G grouping took place in Rambouillet, France, in November 1975. It included France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and was sometimes known as the G-6. Canada was added in 1976, and the group became known as the G-7. Representation of the European Community was added in 1977, but the group continued to be known as the G-7 until the addition of Russia in 1998, when it became the G-8.

Lacking the permanent structure of a founding treaty, the Gs have followed an almost free-form path of evolution. In their original purpose, this series of high-level (particularly summit) meetings brought together the leading industrialized, and predominantly Western, powers to coordinate economic policy. Over time, particularly as the G-8, this process has taken important initiatives in the area of international peace and security—for example, the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass

Destruction (which may hold the record for longest name of a multilateral effort) and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

As we know, this grouping of industrialized powers, the G-7/8, started to be increasingly unrepresentative of the wider world and shifting power realities. In response, the G-8 reached out via an intensive ongoing set of consultations with Brazil, India, China, South Africa, and Mexico. The G-20 convened its first meetings of finance ministers and central bankers in 1999, in response to the Asian financial crisis.

Then, of course, the recent financial crisis forced the issue. The G-8 countries simply lacked the leverage for an effective response. It was time to give rising, regional, and middle powers full seats at a larger table—which was accomplished by upgrading the nearly ten-year-old series of G-20 meetings among finance ministers to summit level. The first of these was held in November 2008 in Washington, DC. The fact that three summit meetings were then held within the space of a year is a sign of the G-20's importance in dealing with the economic crisis.

When the G-20 was upgraded by last September's Pittsburgh summit to become the premier forum for their international economic cooperation, it was an important step to heighten cooperation among established and emerging powers. Arguably, this move gave diplomatic recognition to geopolitical realities and power shifts that had been evident for some years. The G-20 will meet in Canada in June 2010 and in Korea in November 2010. They expect to meet annually thereafter, with a meeting in France in 2011.

Significant questions remain regarding the future shape of the G groupings. Lacking the structure of a founding treaty or formal decision rules, what forms of action will these so-called "leadership clubs" take? Will a more inclusive approach to summit diplomacy yield problem-solving consensus? How will informal forums like the G groupings relate to formal institutions like the United Nations and other types of intergovernmental organizations? If the G-20 is the premier economic policy forum, will the G-20, G-8, or some other G grouping play a regularized role on political and security matters and on other transnational issues?

The contrasts with the United Nations are clear. Structurally, the Gs are a series of meetings. Traditionally, they crescendo with annual summits, though more frequently in recent years. In contrast, the deliberative structures of the United Nations are permanent, many of them continuing year-round, including the General Assembly and Security Council. The United Nations has a permanent secretariat and a significant staff. Through its various agencies and departments, it has ongoing operational responsibilities. The United Nations was intentionally created in 1945 as a highly decentralized system. Although recent years have seen continuing efforts to promote coordination and coherence among system elements and with outside collaborating organizations, this remains a work in progress.

Will a more inclusive approach to summit diplomacy yield problem-solving consensus?

The focus and agenda of the G-8 and G-20 are moving targets. As we've seen, the primary focus on economic affairs has been extended in other directions, but in an ad hoc way. The various organs of the United Nations have more clearly defined mandates.

For international security in particular, the Pittsburgh summit announcement left major ambiguities. Will the Gs continue to play a role on political and security affairs? What issues will remain the province of the G-8? Or will the model be variable geometry like the Major Economies Forum—a G grouping tailored to deal with climate change?

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Then there is the question of membership and legitimacy. The United Nations' membership is universal, but there are increasing indications of discomfort with the Security Council composition and voting arrangements. The shift to the G-20 and the earlier consultations with Brazil, India, China, South Africa, and Mexico were driven by the need for a more inclusive body. But now there are new sensitivities and controversies about whether the G-20 is too exclusive and a self-appointed group asserting its own decision-making prerogatives.

One answer may be for the G-20 to use modes of action that are sensitive to its informality, as well as to have robust consultations with non-G-20 countries. As I'm sure we'll discuss, the United Nations can be particularly helpful in giving visibility to the concerns of the "G-172."

In our conference agenda, we will review the context for complementarity between the United Nations and the Gs. We will consider major multilateral issue areas: the global economy, international peace and security, climate change, and other transnational challenges. For each area, we will ask what comparative advantages the United Nations and the Gs offer, what will help ensure that their efforts are complementary, rather than competitive, and then how to synchronize both with other multilateral entities. Finally, we will develop recommendations on actions that will foster complementarity.

We are delighted that you have joined us. This exceptional group of participants brings a dynamic mix of perspectives and specialties. We intend this conference to permit exploration of ideas and exchange of thinking on what should be done to rationalize the roles of these two key components of the multilateral system, and advance a shift of focus from the structure of cooperation to the substantive content of solutions for today's urgent problems. We sincerely hope that the next two days of discussions will help generate new ideas and approaches that will gain broad support and serve as a basis for progress.

The rapporteur, Rebecca Friedman, prepared this report following the conference. It contains her interpretation of the proceedings and is not merely a descriptive, chronological account. Participants neither reviewed nor approved the report. Therefore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to all recommendations, observations, and conclusions.

Conference Report

In the short time since the 2008 financial crisis, the Group of Twenty nations (G-20) has emerged as a major player in global economic governance. Moreover, the G-20 is part of a broader trend in multilateral cooperation; in the past two decades, various “G groupings” have evolved to confront pressing transnational issues and crises. According to some assessments, this rise of the “G-x” process is the most significant global governance development since the end of the Cold War. And as the G-x groupings have grown in influence and importance, it has become crucial to define how these informal institutions will relate to treaty-based organizations like the United Nations and the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs).

In its 41st United Nations Issues Conference, March 26-28, 2010, the Stanley Foundation gathered UN leaders and global governance experts in Tarrytown, New York, to discuss “The United Nations and the G-20: Ensuring Complementary Efforts.” The question posed to participants was: what can be done to ensure complementarity between the G-20 and other G groupings and traditional bedrock multilateral institutions such as the United Nations?

Most participants believed that there is indeed the potential for a complementary and collaborative, rather than competitive, relationship between the G-20 and the United Nations. The discussion focused on general complementarities, as well as the specific comparative advantages in the thematic areas of economic policy, peace and security affairs, climate change, and other transnational challenges. Participants expected the United Nations to remain an important locus of global governance, although some said major reforms will be needed for the United Nations to improve its effectiveness and maintain its relevance.

This report provides a summary of the conference discussions. It begins by outlining the context for trying to maximize complementarity between the United Nations and the G-20, focusing on historical background and comparative advantages of the two institutions. Second, the report describes modalities for cooperation between the United Nations and the G-20, including consultation, outreach, the role of the secretary-general, and UN reform. The third section outlines complementarities between the United Nations and G-20 on the global economic agenda, which is followed by a discussion of the possibilities on international peace and security, climate change, and other transnational issues. The report then concludes with policy recommendations. As an adjunct to the discussion summary, there is an annex giving an overview of agendas and procedures for the Canadian and Korean 2010 G-20 summits.

The Origins and Background of the G-20

The first summit of industrialized powers (initially six nations) was held in Rambouillet, France, in November 1975. The addition of Canada the fol-

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lowing year made it the G-7, a configuration that held firm for over 20 years, until the 1998 inclusion of Russia. Over its history, the lack of a founding treaty has allowed the G-x to evolve freely. Whereas it concentrated on economic issues through its early history, it eventually turned its attention to international peace and security issues with such programs as the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

The more inclusive G-20 was formed in 1999, in response to the Asian financial crisis, and focused on meetings among finance ministers. When the 2008 financial crisis struck, world leaders quickly concluded that the G-8 lacked a quorum of major economic players and would not be able to respond effectively. The existence of the G-20 grouping gave leaders an “off-the-shelf” policy consultation to use as a forum for urgent action on the global economic meltdown. Participants in the Tarrytown conference noted that the choice of the G-20 was not difficult, since no other multilateral body was equipped to do the job as rapidly and efficiently. Ultimately, the crisis needed the involvement and action of heads of state and government, prompting US President George W. Bush to convene a summit in Washington in November 2008, followed by two more within a year. After two more G-20 summits in fairly rapid succession, leaders decided at their September 2009 Pittsburgh meeting to designate the grouping as the “premier forum for international economic cooperation.” The G-20 will meet in Canada in June 2010 (subsequent to a G-8 meeting, also in Canada), and again in South Korea in November 2010. In 2011 and beyond, the G-20 is expected to downshift to a single annual summit meeting.

Emphasizing the need to keep the G-20 in perspective, some conference participants drew contrasts between this recent history and the creation of the United Nations. One participant noted that US President Franklin D. Roosevelt consciously chose to pursue “inclusive multilateralism” for the postwar international order. Moreover, Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill devised an entire set of permanent institutions and rules as a comprehensive framework for multilateral cooperation. Another participant, though, pointed out that the United Nations and the BWIs, for all their solidity, did have elements of exclusivity and differentiated status—e.g., the composition and voting shares in the UN Security Council and BWIs.

Participants raised a fundamental question about the future trajectory of the G-20. Will this grouping of influential nations undergo further significant evolution, or has it reached stasis? Most expected change, and one stressed the panoply of consultations and urged others to think of it as a G-x process with a varying geometry of combinations and policy levels. Given that the G-20 summit meetings trace their roots to a specific crisis, participants discussed whether and how the G-20 would make the transition between a “wartime organization” and a “peacetime organization.” One participant questioned whether the G-20 would survive absent the cohesion created by joining forces in a dire emergency. Another participant argued that, beyond

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the economic crisis, the G-20 does not have enough like-mindedness to stick together the way the earlier, smaller G groupings have. Many other speakers disagreed with this characterization; one suggested that the G-20 “will not remain rooted in crisis” and that the group will have a natural impulse to self-perpetuate and expand its agenda. Now that the G-20 has been created, leaders will continue to use it to handle issues that they decide are better addressed outside of the UN system. Most participants agreed that the G-20 is not static, that it should not be, and that the G structure will change over time.

Comparative Advantages of the United Nations and the G-20

Many participants described great potential for the G-20 to serve as a catalyst, and even a staging ground, for UN action on key issues. As one participant noted, the United Nations is “far and away the dominant actor in normative, operational actions.” Still, action in the United Nations requires a critical mass of influential countries to mobilize and take the lead on an issue, and then others need to “buy in.” The value of the G-20 is that leaders are engaged, have a direct interest in the issue at hand, and have an incentive to take action, which gives the potential to generate political will, and then collective action. Since G-20 members are also UN member states, the G-20 can “de-conflict major power actions,” alleviating suspicion and fears, and creating “pathways to cooperation” in the United Nations. Another participant pointed out that it is already common in the United Nations for smaller groupings to come together to sort out issues as a basis for agreement in the larger group. The G-20 can build an “atmosphere of progress,” while still relying on the broad legitimacy of the United Nations. As one participant put it, the G-20 “cannot bind but it can lead.”

Indeed, many participants agreed that the United Nations’ universality and moral and legal authority constitute its greatest comparative advantage. Perspectives on the G-20’s degree of legitimacy were more mixed. Some noted that, although the G-20 lacks the United Nations’ universality, it does represent over 85 percent of the global economy and 67 percent of the world’s population. One pointed out that the new G-20 summits represent a “revealed preference” on the part of world leaders—their participation affirms that they consider them to be worth their time. A few participants argued that the G-20 derives legitimacy from the way it includes developing and developed countries on equal footing, unlike the two-tiered systems of the United Nations, the G-7/8, and the BWIs. Finally, one participant bluntly remarked that the legitimacy debate is “a UN issue” because informal institutions do not spend much time worrying about legitimacy.

Many participants acknowledged a tradeoff between inclusiveness and effectiveness. As one participant explained, for effectiveness, one is only concerned about having the minimum number of countries needed to handle a matter. With its smaller size, the G-20 can be more nimble than the United Nations. Another participant pointed out that the G-20’s small size instills in members a “very strong sense of ownership of the decisions taken.” This inclusiveness-effectiveness balance is quite delicate, and G-20 leaders will

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have to consider whether they can admit more countries while maintaining an optimal balance—it's not clear where to draw the line. Participants also discussed the importance of like-mindedness in reaching decisions and being effective. One of the unresolved questions of a shift from the G-7 or G-8 to the G-20 (or the variable geometry of G-x) will be whether groups with greater diversity can find the consensus for cooperation and action.

In discussing the G-20's membership and representativeness, one participant contended that the only way for the G-20 to be fully representative is if it could somehow represent the "G-192," or all UN member states—something the G-20 members would not even contemplate. A few participants questioned the logic of the current composition, with one participant remarking that it is "not the perfect 20." In practice, Spain and the Netherlands are engaged, and there have been invitations to regional groupings like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the African Union (AU). The participant wondered whether there was a way to make the group more inclusive, even by enlarging it to a G-24. Another participant suggested adding the countries that have been pressing hard to get in. Some participants criticized the G-20 for its inadequate representation of the developing world, especially Africa. In particular, these participants voiced concern that the G-20 does not represent the views of some countries that are suffering most from the financial crisis and food security crisis. Many stressed the value of greater consultation with the United Nations to ensure that the points of view of developing countries are heard at the G-20.

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Another dimension of the G-20's ambiguous authority and relation to "the rest" is the question of how the actions of the G-20 affect non-G-20 members. Strictly speaking, the group is confined to commitments on behalf of their own governments; actions of the G-20 have no multilateral standing beyond the steps and stances they can take as a collection of nations. Yet given the G-20 countries' economic and political clout, one participant expressed a fear that they have the "capacity to impose decisions that they have reached on other countries who do not have that capacity." The participant cited Copenhagen as an example of a small group of powerful countries trying to foist policy decisions on others who had been cut out of the process. Other participants disputed this characterization of the Copenhagen agreement, however, because it was reached in a forum sponsored by the United Nations rather than the G-20. As an example of the G-20 carrying weight beyond its membership, a participant noted that the Caribbean states consider themselves bound by G-20 decisions regarding tax havens, even though their only influence is through the loose mandate for Canada to represent their region's concerns. Whatever the range of views in the conference discussions, most participants agreed that any G-20 actions that would have a major impact on non-G-20 countries should be accompanied by a vigorous outreach process. The Global Governance Group of small countries (3G) is one venue for such consultation.

Some participants suggested that the United Nations enjoys an advantage by virtue of its well-developed institutional machinery. The United Nations and

G-20 have different resources that they can bring to bear when confronting challenges. The G-20 has financial capital and political capital that members bring when there is a consensus, but no permanent institutional structure. As one participant observed, the lack of structure gives the G-20 flexibility to respond to crises as they arise. Another pointed out that even with its institutional thinness, the G-x process has shown a strong ability to develop policy frameworks and agendas through its summits, ministerial meetings, task forces, and ad hoc committees, as well as its creation of the Financial Stability Board.

This led to a discussion of whether the G-20 should establish a secretariat. Most participants agreed that the G-20 should not have a secretariat. There was a great deal of support for the idea that the informal structure of the G-20 reflects its essential character as a forum for policy consultation among states, rather than a traditional intergovernmental organization. A few participants saw a G-20 secretariat as posing an at least symbolic threat to the United Nations, suggesting instead that the G-20 should “do their business then come back to the multilateral organizations.” One participant insisted that the G-20 should only maintain a virtual home in cyberspace. Wanting to nix any false ideas about G-20 ambitions, a few others emphasized that there is “no interest among the G-20 in a secretariat.” Indeed, one participant pointed out that the G-8 never had a secretariat—though another wryly observed that the G-8 had the “whole OECD” as a secretariat. While the idea of a central, staffed, international secretariat has yet to gain any traction, the question remains whether the need might become compelling if the G-20 agenda and diplomatic tempo increase significantly.

Participants pointed out that at G-20 summits, the secretary-general is tasked with representing the whole United Nations, yet the 192 member states don't hold common views. Expressing a desire for a more substantive consultation, a participant described recent pre-G-20 meetings between the secretary-general and member states which gave him “statements from the European Union (EU), from the G-77, then 15 to 30 interventions, largely mindless, pointless comments that add or subtract nothing.”

Modalities of United Nations/G-20 Cooperation

In discussing modalities of cooperation between the United Nations and the G-20, participants broke the problem down into the front- and back-end connections between the two organizations. One participant asked, “How does the UN feed into the G-20, and how does the G-20 feed into the United Nations?” Many agreed that the United Nations and G-20 have not yet gotten this relationship “right.”

Nearly everyone agreed that the most important type of cooperation is consultation. Most participants also agreed that the onus is on the G-20, and particularly the G-20 host countries, to take the initiative in reaching out to the United Nations. They also noted two modes of outreach: through the secretary-general and directly with member states.

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The secretary-general was given credit for the inclusion of poverty reduction and the less-developed countries as part of the trillion-dollar response to the economic crisis.

Although participants agreed that the secretary-general serves as a crucial link, there were differences over the extent to which he can shape the debate—both in the United Nations and the G-20. For each G-20 meeting, the secretary-general’s pattern has been to go to the whole UN membership, lay out the issues on the agenda, and outline his planned message. The secretary-general then revises his talking points on the basis of feedback from member states, typically a set of 15-40 suggestions. The secretary-general believes that when he is invited to the G-20 summits, he is not invited as an individual, but rather as the representative of the United Nations and a broader set of views. His interventions have reflected that. Although he cannot represent every viewpoint, he has made a conscious effort to bring other voices into the G-20 discussions. A conference attendee vouched for the secretary-general’s marked impact at the G-20 summits—for example, at the London meeting, the inclusion of poverty reduction and the less-developed countries as part of the trillion-dollar commitment to combat the economic crisis. It was noteworthy that a number of participants were unaware that the secretary-general had played this role, with one suggesting the need for the secretary-general to get his “PR machine in order.”

Others viewed the secretary-general’s consultation with UN member states more skeptically. Rather than collecting input from the General Assembly two or three weeks before a summit, he should engage in deeper consultations six months in advance. Moreover, the pre-G-20 meetings themselves are “dreadful” because everyone, including the secretary-general, is just reading previously prepared statements.

Another speaker gave a different view of the proper role for the secretary-general at the G-20: instead of trying to synthesize incongruous member-state viewpoints, he should forthrightly press the interests of the United Nations as an organization. In this way, he would represent the United Nations as an actor on the world stage—promoting it as a channel for helping implement some G-20 initiatives, reminding the G-20 of what the United Nations is already doing to prevent overlap, and holding the G-20 accountable to the broadest constituencies and ideals. While the secretary-general should consult with member states, this responsibility is shared between him and the G-20 host country. Responding to this point, another participant asked, “If the secretary-general represents the United Nations, what does he represent?” The first participant answered that the secretary-general has two roles: conveying the views of small nations and offering “objective views,” based on independent data collection.

There was also discussion about the question of the secretary-general’s right to speak at the G-20 summits. If he does not have permission to speak at a summit, one participant argued, then the United Nations “should not confer legitimacy to the process in which it has no say,” instead using its moral pulpit to embarrass the host country. Another participant, elaborating on this point, said that the treatment of the secretary-general’s sherpa is equally critical. The secretary-general’s involvement in the summit process should be genuine and long term. Addressing the specifics of the presummit plan-

ning process and ministerial meetings, another speaker suggested that someone from the UN executive office should act as sherpa, and the head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) should be the UN delegate to finance minister meetings.

Direct outreach to the “G-172” is another important mode of consultation, although no pattern has yet been established. Some participants spoke about presummit consultations from direct experience, noting, among other things, that each G-20 host country has handled outreach differently. In the runup to the September 2009 Pittsburgh summit, much effort went into UN outreach, particularly geared toward less developed countries. British diplomats came to the United Nations for consultations prior to the April 2009 London summit. Looking toward the June 2010 meeting in Toronto and November 2010 Seoul summit, a participant confirmed that ideas and suggestions from non-G-20 countries would likely have an impact. Another participant, though, expressed disappointment with recent consultations, indicating they were “not as productive as hoped” because the emissary in question received little in the way of substantive reaction or suggestions.

Several participants proposed creative alternative means by which the G-20 could consult with UN member states. One suggested meeting not only with the UN membership as a whole, but also with small groups of countries. The difficulty was noted of deciding on the lines along which those groupings would be convened; then it was suggested that consulting with subregional areas would be most constructive. With an even more structural proposal, another participant suggested that nonpermanent members of the Security Council could be incorporated into the G-20 for their two-year terms on the council. The speaker conceded the incongruity of using the United Nations’ peace and security mechanism as a link to the world’s premier economic policy forum. Certainly, one available diplomatic channel between the United Nations and the G-20 is the 3G, a caucus of small countries with the exact purpose of “building a bridge” between the two forums. One speaker from a G-20 country said that the 3G’s contributions have been “very constructive.”

The G-20 as Catalyst for UN Reform

While most participants expressed their confidence in the potential for complementarity between the G-20 and the United Nations, a few highlighted the hostility that the G-20 faces from some in the United Nations. Some member states resent the G-20 and refuse to recognize it as legitimate because it does not have universal membership. In some corners, the G-20 is viewed as a threat to the “way the United Nations works” and to the G-77, whose bloc is already fracturing. One speaker reported refusal in some settings to even recognize the G-20’s existence—for instance, in the UN General Assembly Second Committee, where states won’t allow the word “G-20” to appear in resolutions. Another participant echoed this point, saying “hostility is not too strong a word...it can get very heated at the United Nations.” Interestingly, participants suggested that the G-20 may pose a greater threat than the G-8 because its inclusion of developing countries and a larger share of the world population and economy give it a stronger mantle of legitimacy.

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Although most participants agreed that the G-20 does not present an existential threat to the United Nations, the majority did perceive the rise of the G-20 as a challenge nonetheless. More specifically, by providing an alternative venue for global cooperation, the G-20 may ratchet up pressure for change and reform in the United Nations. Highlighting the stakes in a dramatic fashion, one speaker recalled that the League of Nations was created because of the failure of collective security in World War I, and the United Nations was created out of the failure of the league. “Now will we allow the United Nations to fail?” the speaker asked.

Many participants believed that the G-20 might provide impetus for UN revitalization and reform.

The G-20’s successful response to the recent financial crisis demonstrated its value. In an hour of dire need for leadership, the G-20 filled the gap. A participant illustrated the problem by bemoaning the staleness of the economic policy debate in the United Nations, saying that the “quality of the discourse on [economic and social] issues is poor. Those committed to seeing the United Nations thrive have lamented how the quality of the conversation...has really declined. It’s a major challenge we all need to work together to solve.” According to another participant, UN members’ refusal to address complicated issues—taking shelter in a frequent retreat into a bloc mentality—does not help the situation. Switching around how the issue is usually perceived, one speaker pointed out that non-G-20 states have a particular interest in making the United Nations more effective to demonstrate its continued relevance and help make treaty-based multilateral organizations attractive enough for major players to want to work with them.

Looking at it optimistically, many participants believed that the G-20 might provide impetus for UN revitalization and reform. The vexed issue of UN Security Council reform exemplifies the problem. Whatever else one could say about the G-20, the emergence of a forum that gives greater voice to nations of the global south is a glaring contrast with the anachronistic makeup of the Security Council. (Interestingly, the G-20 does break the oft-lamented correlation between international status and nuclear arms.) Nevertheless, a few participants questioned whether the G-20 might actually relieve pressure for Security Council reform because of the alternative venue it gives rising powers for leadership. Recalling the essential difference between formal and informal multilateralism, though, another pointed out that the craving for a seat on the Security Council will be unchanged because of its power to pass binding resolutions, unlike the G-20.

Several speakers suggested that the United Nations should reform in other ways as well. They offered several suggestions. Among them, the United Nations needs to relearn how to partner, recognizing the necessity of working with other international actors. Second, the United Nations needs to reorganize its Secretariat and marshal a “critical mass of assets” for doing things that are “important, useful, and productive.” Third, the United Nations should reform the way it works day-to-day to become less bureaucratically cumbersome. Fourth, the United Nations should consider creating an economic security council. Fifth, in the broader “UN family,” the BWIs should reform their voting systems.

Ensuring Complementary Efforts on the Global Economy

The Bretton Woods Institutions—The World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF)—and the World Trade Organization (WTO) were integral to a discussion of the United Nations and G-20 roles on the global economic agenda. Most participants agreed that the G-20 will continue to be a key forum for financial issues, though several participants drew a distinction between financial issues and economic issues more broadly. Although there were some concerns about a growing G-20 role on the broader agenda, most participants felt comfortable with this trend and had faith in the G-20's ability to deal with development issues. For some at the conference, the G-20 role was an established fact, rather than an open question.

Several participants stressed an important distinction between the United Nations and the BWIs. The UN role has been to serve as an advocate of development, while the BWIs were created as levers of economic crisis management and policy. And notwithstanding the idea of creating a new “economic security council” as a long-term goal, the United Nations realistically does not have an economic policy capacity comparable to the G-20. A few speakers discussed the changes afoot in the BWIs in the wake of the financial crisis. One participant touted the adaptability of the BWIs and their reinvigoration in dealing with the crisis. Another described the crisis as a humbling experience for the macroeconomic norms of the BWIs and suggested that they take this opportunity to move beyond the Washington Consensus. One participant offered that the same criticism extends beyond the BWIs to the WTO, saying that globalization and trade liberalization have contributed to the economic and food security crisis, and suggesting that we “rethink what has been achieved at the WTO.”

As with the discussion of the secretary-general's role in the G-20, a few participants argued for the executive heads of the IMF and WB to have more “airtime” at the G-20 summits. One participant pointed out that whereas the executive heads spoke to the initial November 2008 G-20 summit in Washington, they now “speak only when spoken to” and offer technical advice. Another anticipated that as the G-20 transitions from crisis mode to a medium-term agenda, the IMF and WB will become more critical for important issues on the agenda, making their inclusion all the more vital. Already, G-20 countries are looking to the BWIs for analysis and help in preparing and implementing G-20 decisions.

As a counterweight to the credit often given to the G-20 in keeping the global downturn from worsening, several participants were concerned about the G-20's failures and unfulfilled commitments. One noted pointedly that the financial crisis represented a failure of the G-20, which had been created for the express purpose of predicting and preventing financial instability. Another saw it as ironic that the “Financial Stability Forum failed, but rather than recognizing the failure, it was upgraded to the Financial Stability Board.” Yet another speaker raised a further credibility problem—that the \$20 billion promised for food security at L'Aquila in 2009 had not been forthcoming. Several speakers mentioned the G-20's “standstill” provisions

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to resist protectionism as another failed initiative. One participant also mentioned executive compensation, which has devolved to national legislatures.

Pairing the need for G-20 accountability with UN strengths in norm-setting and analytical capacity, numerous participants proposed a UN role for economic impact assessment. A couple of participants emphasized the United Nations' special insight into the living conditions of the poor and vulnerable. A concrete example of this is the Global Impact and Vulnerability Assessment System. Housed in the United Nations, it is assembling data to analyze the effects of the financial crisis on the world's most vulnerable people.

Pairing the need for G-20 accountability with UN strengths in analytical capacity, participants proposed a UN role for economic impact assessment.

Ensuring Complementary Efforts Beyond the Economic Agenda

Looking ahead at the future of the G-20, conference participants discussed the merits of G-20 agenda expansion into noneconomic issues. While some participants opposed any broadening of scope, at least for now, others saw a likely migration of world leaders' attention across a broader range of topics. It is in the very nature of their governmental function that heads of state deal with all areas of policy. This also matches the interlinked nature of many contemporary global governance challenges, in which it is often difficult to distinguish where one policy area ends and another begins.

International Peace and Security. A number of participants expressed the opinion that the G-20 is not ready to address international peace and security issues; such a transition would represent a "quantum jump" from its current domain. Aside from predictions about how the agenda will be shaped by world leaders' substantive interests and policy prerogatives, a key issue was the perceived UN/G-20 division of labor on political and security affairs. As one participant pointed out, the combination of the Security Council's legal authorities, established patterns of action, and year-round sessions argue convincingly against any notion of the G-20 attempting to duplicate functions such as initiating peacekeeping missions, mediation efforts, or investigations, or passing judgment on a state's actions. This leaves plenty of room for G groupings to use appropriate levers for other kinds of contributions in this area. The G-8 has operated in just such a complementary fashion by sponsoring the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

While reluctance to challenge the established multilateral rules for peace and security will put limits on the G-20 role for the foreseeable future, at least one participant predicted that the division of labor might break down if Security Council reform fails to materialize reasonably soon. The expected drivers of an increased but limited security policy role for the Gs are "crises of the moment" and areas where members are fairly like-minded, such as peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and biosecurity.

Those conference participants most supportive of G-20 involvement in peace and security hoped the G-20 would galvanize the agenda with political energy and consensus building, and thereby mobilize the United Nations

to play its role. So long as the G-20 stays within international law and refrains from exceeding its remit, said one speaker, discussion of security poses no inherent danger. On the other hand, several participants feared that agenda expansion into peace and security issues could be politically damaging to the G-20, opening it to diplomatic wrangling and impasses like those that occur in the Security Council.

Climate Change. Little time was devoted to climate change in the conference discussions. There was a near consensus among participants that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is indispensable to a long-term climate change deal, though several participants saw a role for smaller group discussions in support of the UN process. A few foresaw a comparative advantage for the G-20 in climate finance. One participant predicted that the G-20 will have some part in addressing climate change-related issues such as fossil fuel subsidies and clean-tech development. That said, however, there was concern that G-20 discussion of topics under negotiation in the UNFCCC would be politically “dangerous.” In contrast, a few participants spoke up for the Major Economies Forum/Major Economies as valuable in advancing the climate change agenda.

Another view was offered, asserting that climate change demands a level of multilateral cooperation far beyond the status quo or even anything being contemplated. Given the scale of change needed to move toward post-carbon economies, and the associated political challenges, one participant stressed the need for a commensurate diplomatic and policy push. The proper basis of comparison may be the lengthy post-World War II meetings of foreign ministers who crafted the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Ensuring Complementarity: Policy Recommendations

Participants stressed that the United Nations and the G-20 are not and should not be perceived as rivals. Each offers strengths and advantages that complement the other. Hence, the goal for both should be to develop and implement policies and practices that enhance collaboration and complementarity.

Throughout the conference, participants offered policy recommendations for ensuring complementarity between the G-20 and the United Nations. The recommendations fit broadly into three categories: UN/G-20 cooperation, institutional reform, and G-20 focus on building bridges with other nations.

UN/G-20 Cooperation

- Both the G-20 and the United Nations should seek and develop means of making communication and coordination with each other more robust.
- With its political nature, driven by high-level attention, the G-20 has much to offer the United Nations as a policy catalyst. By discussing initiatives and forming an initial consensus, the G-20 can push the UN agenda forward on critical issues. The United Nations and BWIs should consider ways to leverage G-20 clout to advance their key initiatives.

It is in the very nature of their governmental function that heads of state deal with all areas of policy.

The G-20 should consider formalizing a system of outreach to the secretary-general, UN member states, and smaller groupings of states.

- With its universality, treaty-based powers, and continuing Secretariat, the United Nations has much to offer in support of constructive policy initiatives and proposals. It should welcome, vet, and assist in implementing meritorious proposals.
- The United Nations should monitor G-20 commitments and conduct impact assessments. To promote implementation, the United Nations should also advise the G-20 on how to keep its commitments by working through the UN diplomatic bodies, specialized agencies, and the international financial institutions.
- The United Nations should offer the benefit of its experience working with civil society so that the G-20 can become better at engaging this crucial sector.
- UN member states, the secretary-general, and the G-20 should work together to find a viable and effective way to relate the secretary-general to the G-20 process. G-20 hosts should make sure that the secretary-general and his sherpa are invited to all summit-related meetings. The secretary-general should use his involvement to advance the role and agenda of the organization and its member states.
- The G-20 should consider formalizing a system of outreach to the secretary-general, UN member states, and smaller groupings of states.
- The G-20 and the United Nations should continue to collaborate on the Global Impact and Vulnerability Assessment System in the United Nations.
- The United Nations should emphasize its usefulness to the G-20 and solicit G-20 support for important UN initiatives, like Millennium Development Goals.
- The G-20 should develop a better early-warning system that will be more effective in detecting impending economic crises.

Institutional Reform

- The rise of the G-20 should be a spur to UN reform, particularly Security Council and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) reform.
- If the G-20's agenda is broadened beyond the global economy and financial system, the group's composition will need to be reviewed, such as shifting to a variable geometry G-x pattern with different groupings for different policy areas, or adding members to include other needed interests and capabilities.

G-20 Focus on Building Bridges With Other Nations

- The G-20 should work to deliver on its previous commitment that its aggregate \$1.1 trillion response to the financial crisis will not only promote overall global economic recovery, but will also extend its benefits to developing nations.

- The G-20 should consider how to help jumpstart the Doha round of trade negotiations.
- The United Nations and the G-20 should devise a clear role for the G-20 in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals, encouraging greater G-20 ownership and commitment. It should consider soliciting G-20 input on the action plan for the Millennium Development Goals summit in September 2010, and/or asking G-20 leaders to give a special set of keynote addresses at the summit.
- The G-20 meeting planners should explore and develop effective and consistent methods of reaching out to nonmembers, whether at the United Nations, in regional groupings, or by other means. Different host countries have handled this in a variety of ways, and these experiences should contribute to a best-practices methodology.

The United Nations should emphasize its usefulness to the G-20 and solicit G-20 support for important UN initiatives, like Millennium Development Goals.

Chairman's Observations

By Richard H. Stanley

Our discussions in Tarrytown were a constructive chapter in the continuing efforts to improve global governance. Increasing global interconnectedness and interdependence, coupled with growing recognition that the survival issues of the future demand multilateral solutions, are fueling the development of intergovernmental organizations and driving changes in their operations and patterns of collaboration.

The G-20 is a recently emerging summit-level forum for coordination of international economic policy. It arose from an urgent need for better coordination among a larger group of major economies and populations than were included in the earlier G-8. Its rise signals that G-x groupings remain a work in process that will likely continue to evolve—perhaps in composition (variable geometry), mandates, and patterns of activity.

The G-20 joins a large group of international organizations, each of which was originally established to meet particular needs. Some, like the G-20, are an informal series of consultations. Others, like the United Nations, are treaty-based institutions with defined structure, authority, capabilities, and operations. This multilayer network of organizations, coupled with unilateral and bilateral actions, interacting with transnational enterprises, and leavened by an increasingly robust civil society, make up our global governance system. The system is not ideal. It has evolved over time rather than being intentionally designed. Yet, to move forward, we start from where we are, making changes and incremental improvements. Starting with a clean sheet of paper is not an option.

Against this background, our conference focused on two exceedingly important parts of the global governance system and the relationships between them: the United Nations and the G-20. Our discussions were fruitful.

First, there was strong agreement that the United Nations and the G-20 are not in competition with each other and should not be perceived as being so. Each has its own capabilities—its own advantages and disadvantages. Each has an important and continuing role in the system of global governance. Our challenge is to enhance their effectiveness and ensure that they work in a collaborative and complementary manner to contribute to better governance.

Conference participants urged active consultative links between the G-20 with its limited membership and the remaining “G-172” UN member states so that G-x configurations can contribute most effectively toward political and policy consensus building. Small groups within the United Nations can fill a catalytic function at the highest level of international leadership.

Next, participants underscored the need for robust intersection between the G-20 and the United Nations System, both at the “front end” and the “back

The United Nations and the G-20 have important and continuing roles in the system of global governance.

end” of G-20 processes. They advanced specific ideas for doing this. These suggestions are contained in the conference report. They merit full development and implementation.

Finally, as a part of this intersection, summit agenda items should be evaluated in terms of the best channels to achieve intended results. This can provide a useful overall framework for complementary relationships and actions. It can assign tasks in a way that takes advantage of organizational competencies and capabilities. Ideally, it can produce a dynamic allocation of actions (including agenda setting, analysis, policy development, consensus building, and implementation) among the various elements of the global governance system.

The world’s global governance system continues to evolve. Many more chapters remain to be written. But as this proceeds, the international community must provide impetus and seek progress toward the rule of law, which can advance a secure peace with freedom and justice. Let the work continue.

...summit agenda items should be evaluated in terms of the best channels to achieve intended results.

Annex

Agendas and Procedures for Canadian and Korean 2010 G-20 Summits

Conference attendees benefited from a preview of the agenda and process for the two upcoming G-20 summits this year, and the Canadian G-8 summit. The following is a rough outline gleaned from the material presented by participants familiar with preparations underway.

G-20 Procedures

While the summit-level G-20 is still young and lacking a firmly established process, it currently proceeds along the following lines:

- Three sherpa meetings:
 - At the first meeting, sherpas come with proposals for which issues to include and share papers presenting the general background of why each is important enough to be on the agenda. Papers describe the expected policy outcome and proposals for monitoring mechanisms. Coming out of this meeting, the host country will try to identify emerging consensuses.
 - At the second meeting, the host country presents agenda building blocks and a draft document as a basis for discussion of substantive issues and policy modalities. This sets the context for sherpas to argue for their chosen issues as summit agenda items are winnowed.
 - At the third meeting, which usually takes place just prior to the summit, sherpas work on the language of the communiqué.

Agenda for Canada

The G-8 summit in Huntsville, Ontario, will reportedly address a number of human security and international security issues:

- Examination of the initial assessment by the United Nations of Millennium Development Goal gaps. G-8 will compare the assessment of member country contributions on development assistance.
- A major new initiative addressing Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5: child and maternal health.
- Nuclear proliferation.
- Counterterrorism.
- Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The G-20 summit in Toronto will remain focused on economic and financial issues, such as:

- Stimulus balanced with exit strategies.

- Framework for growth.
- Keeping markets open.
- International financial institution reform.
- Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable.

Agenda for South Korea

Prior to the summit, the South Korean government plans to do outreach in two broad areas:

- The United Nations:
 - Series of visits to the United Nations by Korean government officials in May, July, and September. These visits offer member states previews of the plans for G-20 summit.
 - May consultations will be especially extensive: meet with UN membership as a whole, the 3G, least developed countries group, Forum of Small States.
 - July: Officials will meet with ambassadors.
- Regional Groupings:
 - ASEAN, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), AU, Organization of American States (OAS).
 - Trying to build on already-scheduled meetings.

The G-20 summit in Seoul will depend on what is achieved in Toronto.

- Implementation of previous commitments will likely focus on:
 - International financial institution reform: IMF governance, mandate, and revenue questions.
 - Financial regulatory reform: Financial Stability Board and promoting domestic regulations based on G-20 agreements.
 - Macroeconomic coordination: Maintaining a stable recovery after the crisis, through framework on sustainable and balanced growth.
 - Trade: Protectionism, Doha trade talks, trade financing, aid for trade.
- Additional issues:
 - Financial safety net.
 - Development: Division of responsibilities between G-8 and G-20.

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