

THE GERMAN G7 PRESIDENCY

AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASSUME "NEW RESPONSIBILITY" IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Daniela Haarhuis

At this year's Munich Security Conference, President Joachim Gauck called for a "new German foreign policy". His remarks should not go unheeded, but be translated into concrete action. Opportunities for doing so originate in situations where Germany assumes leadership responsibility in international organisations and networks. One obvious case in point is Germany's current G7 Presidency, which is due to culminate in June 2015 at the G7 Summit in Elmau, Bavaria. This paper provides insight into the significance of the G7 in terms of history and political science, outlines the current interests of the individual G7 countries with respect to various issues and suggests topics where Germany could potentially exercise its "new international responsibility".



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THE GROUP OF SEVEN – A POWERFUL CIVIL NETWORK

There are numerous international organisations and conferences. Why should Germany make special efforts with respect to the G7? Because this forum still represents the most powerful civil network there is – notwithstanding all the prophecies of doom about the decline of the USA and its "key allies" and the much-vaunted rise of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). To comprehend this significance, it is worth taking a brief look back at how the G7 (Group of Seven) originated and at the development it has undergone.

From the G4 to the G8 and the G7

In 1973, the finance ministers of the UK, France, Germany and the USA met to debate coordinate economic and monetary policies at the highest level.

During the uncertain years after the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system, the regime of fixed international exchange rates that was linked to the price of gold, and the 1973 oil crisis, it became obvious that there was a need to better coordinate economic and monetary policies at the highest level. In March 1973, the finance ministers of the UK, France, Germany and the USA met in the White House library to debate the matter. That is why these core members of the G7 are also known as the "Library Group".¹ In September of the same year, the Japanese finance minister joined this group, creating the G5 at finance minister level. The transition from the meeting of finance ministers, the "Library Group", to the higher-level meeting of the Heads of State and Government (with a parallel meeting of the finance and foreign ministers) followed as a logical consequence. In 1975 and, respectively, 1976, Italy and Canada joined, creating the G7. It is a small club, the heads of state know each other well, debate informally and are on first name terms. The open political format provides the participants with an environment that is ideal for the direct exchange of ideas with their colleagues.²

In its original composition, the group represented the dominant economic powers of the time; furthermore, these states are all based on a democratic constitution and the non-U.S. members are largely "Atlantic-oriented" as well as militarily allied to the USA.³ In the 1990s, the G7 made a decision to offer membership to Russia – a step that may appear strange in retrospect, but was in fact intended to encourage Russia to develop into a democracy with a free market economy, to become involved in international formats and to accept the values and rules of the G7.⁴

1 | Gordon S. Smith, "G7 to G8 to G20: Evolution in Global Governance", *CIGI Papers*, No. 6, May 2011, 4, <http://cigionline.org/sites/default/files/G20No6.pdf> (accessed 4 Oct 2014).

2 | Cf. *ibid.*

3 | Cf. *ibid.*

4 | Cf. *ibid.*

Table 1

Demographic and selected economic data of G7 members, 2013

Member	Population (2013, in million)	GDP (in trillion U.S. dollars)	GDP per capita (in U.S. dollars)	Trade (2012, in trillion U.S. dollars)
Canada	36.16	1.83	51,958	0.938
France	66.03	2.73	41,421	1.211
Germany	80.62	3.63	45,085	2.676
Italy	59.83	2.07	34,619	0.932
Japan	127.34	4.90	38,492	1.607
United Kingdom	64.10	2.52	44,141	1.121
United States	316.13	16.80	54,678	3.865
European Union*	505.57	18.40	36,392	—
Russia**	143.50	2.10	14,612	0.864

* The European Commission has an observer status.

** Russia became a member of the G7 in 1998 (then G8) and was suspended in March 2014.

Source: The World Bank, "World Development Indicators", <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/variableselection/selectvariables.aspx> (accessed 3 Nov 2014).

On 14 July 1989, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev sent a letter to former French President François Mitterrand, expressing his wish to become involved with the G7. Russia subsequently acceded to the Group in 1998, and the G7 became the G8. One interesting point in this context is the Russian interpretation of the event. In a description of the situation, then incumbent President Boris Yeltsin maintained that the expansion of NATO and Russia's inclusion in the G8 as a compensatory measure were in no way linked. "Russia is one of the most influential countries in the world. Its makeup is unique. We have huge reserves of natural resources, advanced technology, an unbelievable internal market, a highly qualified labor market, and a dynamic society. That is why we were included in the Eight."⁵ There

5 | Peter I. Hajnal, *The G8 System and the G20 – Evolution, Role and Documentation*, Ashgate, 2007, 42 citing Boris Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries*, London, 2000, 137.

is one point that should be borne in mind – also in view of current events: international recognition and specifically membership of the G7/G8 have been (and still are) of great importance to Russia. Despite assertions to the contrary, Russia felt hurt by the exclusion⁶ from the G8 in March 2014, which had become inevitable due to the crisis in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea.



Open dialogue: The small circle of participants and the informal format facilitate direct exchange among colleagues. Cooperation and joint problem solving are paramount. | Source: Tom Robinson, Crown, UK MoD, flickr ©🇬🇧🇬🇧🇬🇧.

G7 and G20

After Russia had been included in 1998, critical voices could be heard. Some people demanded that Russia's membership should be suspended due to its failure to meet democratic standards.⁷ Others thought that if membership was extended to Russia, this should also apply to other economically significant countries such as China and India.⁸ China itself has always rejected the idea of joining the G8, stating it would not want to find itself at the "children's table"

6 | In fact, it was not referred to as an exclusion, but phrased as follows in The Hague Declaration of 24 Mar 2014: "We will suspend our participation in the G8 until Russia changes course and the environment comes back to where the G8 is able to have a meaningful discussion."

7 | This included Senators Joe Lieberman and John McCain in 2005, cf. references in Hajnal, n. 5, 42.

8 | This included e.g. Zbigniew Brzezinski in 1996 and 2004, cf. references *ibid.*, 41.

like Russia.⁹ In fact, strategic considerations led to Russia's inclusion. For one, it was to signal to Russia that it could belong, and secondly, it was to serve as an appeasing gesture to allay Moscow's fears about the impending eastward expansion of NATO. Or, to use the words of former U.S. President Bill Clinton: "I told Yeltsin that if he would agree to NATO-expansion and the NATO-Russia partnership, I would make a commitment not to station troops or missiles in the new countries prematurely, and to support Russia's membership at the new G-8, the World Trade Organization, and other international organizations."¹⁰ The idea was to seek to counteract the crisis affecting the Russian state at the time – Russia was suffering from internal instability and rampant crime in the 1990s – from the outside by promising Russia a place in the international community in conjunction with economic support.

Crises have repeatedly caused changes within the G7 configuration, and subsequent to the financial crisis in Asia and Latin America and as a consequence of the debate over an expansion of the G8, the Group of Twenty (G20) was founded in 1999 to develop a dialogue platform for monetary policy issues within a North-South dialogue. There had also been an increasing realisation within the G8 that many monetary policy issues could no longer be resolved within the "small" G8 format. The choice of members of the G20 also gave rise to some obvious questions.¹¹ Why is Mexico included but not Chile? Why was Indonesia invited but not Malaysia? Why is South Africa the only representative of the African continent? The answer is simple: politics are guided by interests, and the chosen states share more interests with the G7 members than others.¹²

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9 | More extensive details regarding China's potential inclusion *ibid.*, 41; Yi Kang Wu, "International economic system at the new era", in: Jiemian Yang (ed.), *International system in changing and shaping*, Shanghai Institute for International Studies, 2006, 48-63.

10 | *Ibid.*, 41.

11 | The members are: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

12 | The response regarding Mexico versus Chile is as follows: Mexico plays a bridging role on the American continent and, as a neighbouring country of the USA, is of strategic importance for that country. South Africa was to be rewarded for ▶



Global governance: Since 1999 another component does exist in the international architecture of networking, the G20. This group of industrial countries and emerging economies forms 85 per cent of the worldwide economic performance. | Source: Crown, The Prime Minister's Office, flickr @①②③④.

The G20 meetings were initially limited to meetings of the finance ministers and the central bank governors, but the next major economic and financial crisis in 2007/08 brought about the realisation that the G20 meetings should also be held at the level of the Heads of State and Government; this took place in 2008 in Washington. Like the G7, the G20 is an informal meeting without a founding treaty or permanent secretariat, the purpose of which is policy coordination. As the G20 represents approximately two thirds of the world's population, 85 per cent of global GDP and over 75 per cent of global trade,¹³ it has replaced the G7 as the "Global Economic Council of leading industrialised nations". It does, however, remain the case that it is easier for the G7 countries to coordinate their affairs, as the number of participants is smaller and, crucially, as there is a shared value base within the G7, differing from that of countries such as China and Saudi Arabia in particular.

its engagement in the fight against landmines and its support for the establishment of the International Criminal Court. Cf. on South Africa Peter Draper, Elizabeth Sidiropoulos and Keri Leicher, "South Africa's Objectives at the G20", *KAS International Reports*, 5/2010, 114 et seq., <http://kas.de/wf/en/33.19454> (accessed 27 Oct 2014). Another country sharing the same interests would be Switzerland, whose G20 membership does, however, depend on a reform of its status as a tax haven.

13 | Cf. G20, "G20 Members", https://g20.org/about_g20/g20_members (accessed 26 Oct 2014).

THE G7 SEEN FROM A POLITICAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

As an informal forum of Heads of State and Government, the G7 is an interesting format, whose examination from a political science perspective will provide a better understanding of its role and significance. As explained

previously, the G7 came into being in response to the financial crisis of the 1970s. At the time, the realms of political science were still dominated by the remnants of "Classical Realism", while the concept of "interdependence" was on the rise and also having an impact on practical politics. Classical Realism is based on the idea that the variables of power and interest determine international relations. The standard work is *Politics Among Nations* by Hans J. Morgenthau. States play the central role; according to Morgenthau, the foundation for the responsible exercising of power is morally founded diplomacy, the concept of statesmanship, namely continuous diplomatic efforts to strive for better realisation of liberty and justice.¹⁴ One representative of this school of thought, former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, was involved in the founding of the G7, and consequently the elements of power and interest are reflected in an exclusive club consisting of just seven countries. This outlook sparked protest from within civil society and prompted allegations that "those in power" conduct "backroom politics" to the detriment of poorer countries.

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But the concept of interdependence has also had an impact on the G7 at its inception. Following the breakdown of the Bretton Woods currency system and the first oil crisis of 1973, the individual states were engaged in devising separate solutions to overcome the crisis. Although these efforts were not successful, they did bring about the realisation that there was a need for coordination between the states. The idea of the G7 was a logical consequence. The term interdependence cropped up with increasing frequency in speeches, particularly by U.S. politicians, while the concept was also covered in academic papers in economic

14 | Cf. in detail Andreas Jacobs, "Realismus", in: Siegfried Schieder and Manuela Spindler (eds.), *Theorien der Internationalen Beziehungen*, Opladen, 2003, 35-59.

and political science circles, including *The Economics of Interdependence* by U.S. economist Richard Cooper and the standard work from a political science perspective *Power and Interdependence. World Politics in Transition* by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph Nye. Furthered by the simultaneous CSCE process as part of a policy of détente between East and West, some doubt developed with respect to the prevalent paradigm of realism, which gave priority to high politics (= security and the importance of military might as the predominant means of conducting politics). Taking center stage instead were issues of international political economics, which also involved questions of safeguarding prosperity and resource availability. To this end, states need to engage in an exchange and work together.¹⁵



Critical voices: The exclusive character of the G7 is often grounds for criticism. For example in 2005, various civil society groups organised the "Make Poverty History March" in Edinburgh to draw attention to the needs of developing countries. | Source: Nick Thompson, flickr ©①③②.

15 | Cf. in detail Manuela Spindler, "Interdependenz", in: Schieder and Spindler, n. 14, 89-116.

From a political science perspective, the G7 is therefore a symbiosis of the theory of realism and the concept of interdependence. Besides power politics, it offers its critics the desired element of cooperation and joint problem-solving. The binding force is provided not just by economic power but also, crucially, by a common value base of democracy, liberty and the rule of law. The importance of the G7 should, however, not be overstated when examining it under the aspect of global governance, i.e. collaborative action by and distribution of tasks between states, civil society, international organisations and integration zones. In no way does the G7 represent a "global government". Instead, it is part of a complex global governance architecture. The G7 is one further network within this larger network.¹⁶

The G7 is part of a complex global governance architecture with the basis of values of democracy, freedom and rule of law.

POLITICAL SITUATION

Before detailing the potential areas of discussion for the German G7 Presidency, past achievements and current interests of the individual G7 states will be described. Overall, there are several different phases to be distinguished, which summarise the most important issues:

The informal character of the G7 meetings and the private contacts it engenders have been of fundamental significance throughout the different phases and remain so today.¹⁷ What the meetings offer is a forum for cooperation,

16 | Cf. Anne-Marie Slaughter, *A New World Order*, Princeton, Oxford, 2004, 16, 19, 54: "Network of networks' concept"; accordingly, the financial architecture is a combination of different networks: G7, G8, the Basel Committee, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), etc. Finance ministers hold regular meetings under the arrangements of the G7, G20 or the IMF Board of Governors. The G7/G8 became centers around which new groups with even more members formed, which in turn cooperated with other organisations. Consequently, networking by the G7/G8 takes place in a wide international context.

17 | Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter wrote: "[...] with an opportunity to discuss complicated matters personally, in private, rather than to depend on subordinates or diplomatic messages – or the news media – it is easier to resolve many differences. Finally, it is not politically dangerous to approve a controversial point if six other leaders do the same." Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*, Fayetteville, 1982, 538 et seq.

coordination, rapprochement, the opportunity to demonstrate leadership as well as establish links between economic, political and security issues. In terms of concrete achievements, this has, for instance, led to the establishment of the The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in 2001 and the decision to cancel debts in the amount of 56 billion U.S. dollars for the poorest countries of the world, which was implemented by international monetary organisations in 2005. In addition, the governments of the G7 have approved numerous action plans (for Africa, on non-proliferation, against organised crime, for energy efficiency).

Table 2

Phases and fields of action of the G7

Phase	Fields of action
First phase 1975 to 1978	Reviving economic growth
Second phase 1979 to 1982	Holding down inflation
Third phase 1983 to 1988	Rise of politics (disarmament issues)
Fourth phase 1989 to 1993	Managing the end of the Cold War (inclusion of Russia)
Fifth phase 1994 to 1997	Strengthening international institutions for globalization
Sixth phase 1998 to 2000/2001	Globalisation and development issues
Seventh Phase 2002 to 2010	The fight against terrorism
Eighth phase since 2011	Crisis management (e.g. the Arab Spring, Ukraine and increased emphasis on the fight against terror)

Source: Listing according to Hajnal, n. 5, with reference to Nicholas Bayne, *Staying Together: The G8 Summit Confronts the 21st Century*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005; the last phase added by the author.

To determine realistic potential agenda objectives for the 2015 G7 Summit in Elmau, it is helpful to take a look at where the interests of the individual G7 countries currently lie:

United States: U.S. politics are still dominated by domestic issues. Although the Supreme Court has confirmed the healthcare reform as lawful, "Obamacare" is still a red rag to the Republicans, which is bringing out conservative

forces in full. Domestic politics are characterised by a general stance of opposition, which is occasionally overcome by single-handed actions by the President. One example is his stipulation of CO₂ reductions for U.S. coal-fired power stations. Obama is attempting to continue governing the country with this policy of so-called executive orders – strongly criticised by his political opponents – until the end of his current term in office. He has signaled his support in the area of climate policy, which the G7 can refer to in its pursuit of a new climate policy. One needs to bear in mind that this issue is set to displace the Republicans' ideological battle against the healthcare reform in the domestic arena. Nevertheless, it provides the President with an opportunity to shift this controversial issue from the minefield of domestic politics to the more congenial environment of foreign affairs in order to make his mark in this area towards the end of his term (presidential elections in November 2016).



Development politics: Because of their economic strength the G7-members bear responsibility for the developing countries. Debt relief plays an important role. Therefore, the dialogue with African Heads of State and Government, like here in Canada in June 2010, takes place on a regular basis. | Source: Crown, The Prime Minister's Office, flickr @①②③.

In a speech given at the United States Military Academy at West Point in May 2014, Obama further gave an outline of U.S. foreign policy: military action will be taken when the security of the USA is threatened; otherwise, the threshold for military operations must be set at a higher

level. Diplomacy and development assistance are assigned a central role. The U.S. President also ascribed particular importance to the Syrian issue, intensive refugee relief as well as efforts to combat climate change. A further area of outstanding current significance is the fight against the terrorist organisation Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria. There is further a need to find a solution to the Ukraine issue, which will also be a factor in determining the future relationship with Russia. There are areas of overlap with German interests present here, which can find a place on the G7 agenda.

Canada: As Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper is governing with a comfortable majority and domestic policy debates are mostly restricted to penal code reform, the scope for action is wider. Furthermore, the free trade agreement between Canada and the European Union (Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, CETA) was signed in September 2014, although it still awaits approval by the EU Parliament and ratification by the European states and Canada. Traditionally, Canada has had a very close relationship with the USA, while

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remaining intent on preserving its independence. As collaboration in NATO and the G7/G20 is valued highly and Canadian foreign policy is generally characterised by a strong reference to values (e.g. Canada has been a strong advocate of the International Criminal Court), it is likely that Harper has a special interest in the topics of development assistance and refugee relief.¹⁸ Due to the attack on the government district of the Canadian capital Ottawa in October 2014, the topic of terrorism has also moved to the very top of the agenda.

UK: There are elections to the House of Commons coming up in May 2015. This means that a potential new Prime Minister would have an immediate opportunity for his inaugural visit at the G7 summit in June. While the polls still put the opposition Labour Party in front, the incumbent David Cameron appears to be more popular among the population than opposition leader Ed Miliband, not least

¹⁸ | One important topic in Canada is the so-called Muskoka Initiative of 2010, which is due to end in 2015 and might be extended. This is a program to reduce mortality among mothers and young children.

because the UK has emerged from the economic crisis. The foreign affairs debate is currently dominated by the question of the UK's role in the world (in conjunction with the ubiquitous question of its role within the EU). In 2013, the British Parliament voted against military action for the first time after news about the use of poison gas in Syria had emerged. Previously, British forces had always played a leading role in international military action. This does not, however, alter the fact that London will be prepared to consider international initiatives put forward within the G7.

France: The country has been enduring a number of domestic and economic crises for some time, which have become even more acute in the last two years. The regional and European elections produced catastrophic results for the Socialist Party of President François Hollande and have given the populist right-wing parties a new boost. The economic reforms will remain the crucial domestic policy topic in 2015. By contrast with the UK, France is not going through a phase of redefining its position on the world stage, but acting as Washington's new strategic ally. This is partly due to the fact that Germany is, for the time being, still reluctant to exercise its "new international responsibility". Taking advantage of this situation, France is conducting talks with the USA to resolve questions relating to Libya, Mali, the Central African Republic, the Iranian nuclear program, the Syrian civil war as well as the crises in Ukraine and Crimea. Where matters of foreign affairs and security are concerned, Paris is likely to be open to initiatives within the G7 as long as France will play a sufficiently significant role and the financial burden remains within reasonable limits.

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Italy: Following numerous governments formed in recent years, the cabinet around Prime Minister Matteo Renzi has only been in charge since February 2014. As in the case of France, its main task is to overcome the economic crisis and to remain in office as a stable government. Breaking up the sclerotic structures in the labour market is a particularly urgent task. But this may take Renzi's party, the Democratic Party, to a breaking point. Where its activities in foreign affairs are concerned, Italy still acts as one of the world's largest providers of troops. At the European

level Renzi was successful in having his candidate, Federica Mogherini, appointed EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Italy's good relations with Russia are also of importance. So far, Rome has not made much of an impact as a G7 initiator, but it is not likely to oppose new initiatives either, as long as the cost burden will be distributed fairly based on financial capability.

Japan: With his economic development policy, known as "Abenomics", Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is adopting a new approach in economic and foreign policy. The intention is to stimulate the stagnating economy and to position the country as a major power, with an eye on its neighbour China. However, this approach elicited international criticism when Abe paid a visit to the Yasukuni Shrine in December 2013. The shrine is considered a sign of Japanese nationalism,

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and because it involves hero worship of Japanese war dead it symbolises Japan's failure to adequately address the past, particularly where the war crimes perpetrated by Japan in World War II are concerned. By engaging in such activities, Japan risks arousing the displeasure of its international partners, particularly at the present time. In view of China's conduct in the South China Sea and the efforts made by the People's Republic to establish itself as the leading global military power, Japan needs support from its neighbours and from the West more than ever. The G7 summit in 2015 will therefore be important to Tokyo as an opportunity to demonstrate that the important players look favourably upon it.

CONCLUSIONS FOR THE AGENDA

Germany took over the G7 Presidency at the Brussels Summit in June 2014. Meetings of the foreign, finance and energy ministers are already taking place, and preparations for the summit in June 2015 are in full swing at the ministries.¹⁹ Which topics will eventually be debated in Elmau depends on the challenges that will be current at the time. The G7 meetings are still intended to provide an informal forum that leaves some scope to the Heads of State and

19 | The proposals for the agenda are intended to complement the existing topics by providing further key discussion points and impulses.

Government in determining the proceedings, particularly with respect to the issues to be discussed. Chancellor Angela Merkel has already specified some issues that Germany should promote within the G7: sustainable economic activities, quality of life and tax equity as well as a new international climate agreement and further development of the Millennium Development Goals.²⁰ Considering Germany's "new international responsibility" and the G7's current phase of "crisis management", here are some proposals for further points to be included in the agenda:

Chancellor Merkel has already specified issues for the G7: sustainable economic activities, a new international climate agreement and development of the Millennium Development Goals.

1. Strengthen community of values and the transatlantic friendship:

As outlined in the overview of the individual G7 countries, four of them are facing major economic challenges. This can make them susceptible to extreme political positions (a case in point being the gains made by the populist right-wing parties in France). This gives rise to the question of the responsibility to provide leadership in international crises. Germany is not yet willing to accept this responsibility, the UK is, as of recently, no longer willing to do so, while France is currently accepting it together with the USA, who is thankful to have a partner in Europe in this context. Russia is actively conducting geopolitics in its neighbouring countries, and, as evidenced by the skirmishes in the South China Sea, China's policies vis-à-vis the outside world are also becoming more aggressive, despite its official protestations. Added to this is the fact that the situation in many Arab countries is still tense and that stability in the region is a long way off. In the countries where democratisation efforts are taking place ("Arab Spring"), this will naturally take some time. The civil war in Syria is posing a serious threat to the region and encouraging the emergence of Islamist terrorist associations.

In Germany, the situation has been complicated by the divisive impact of the NSA scandal, which has elicited justified criticism, but has unfortunately also had the

20 | Cf. The Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, "G7-Agenda: nachhaltiges Wirtschaften", *Die Kanzlerin direkt*, Podcast, http://bpa.fms-dnl.eviscomedia.com/mpeg4/2014/Die_Kanzlerin_direkt_21_14.mp4 (accessed 27 Oct 2014).

Emphasising the values shared by the G7 countries combined with a commitment to the transatlantic partnership is essential.

effect of making latent anti-Americanism acceptable once again. This attitude has been fuelled further by the controversy over the so-called chlorine-washed chicken in connection with the free trade agreement currently under negotiation (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, TTIP), which, for some people, appears to be developing into an iconic object comparable to the "Juchtenkäfer" (hermit beetle) that dogged the construction of the Stuttgart main railway station.²¹ In view of this situation, emphasising the values shared by the G7 countries combined with a commitment to the transatlantic partnership is essential. Any criticism that this would encourage the formation of a bloc in opposition to Russia can be countered by pointing out that there will always be power blocs in international politics. The question for each individual is: do you prefer to live in a transatlantic liberal country or in a country dominated by Russian or Chinese-style autocratic rule?

In the context of the G7, the governments commit themselves to the shared values in each Summit Declaration. This formulaic statement must be followed up with action and appropriate, in this case positive, policy signals. It is now up to Germany to show its willingness to provide international leadership and to create a forum for commitment to a shared community of values and to the transatlantic friendship in Elmau, where the world's press will be watching.

2. G7, NATO and Russia: Another obvious measure in conjunction with the public commitment to values and to the transatlantic friendship would be to set security-related standards. This does not mean sabre rattling, rather re-examining the NATO military alliance and its orientation; after all, six members of the G7 are also key actors within NATO (Japan is not a member). As the issue of relations with Russia has repeatedly come

21 | In 2011, the Administrative Court Baden-Württemberg stopped the infrastructure project Stuttgart main station, which had evoked considerable public protests. It had to be reviewed whether species protection had been sufficiently taken into account. One of the potentially endangered species was the hermit beetle that became a symbol of the opponents to the project.

down to the relationship between NATO and Russia, the G7 summit is the obvious informal arena to discuss the approach to take in order to successfully de-escalate the situation.

3. Anti-corruption plan for Ukraine: Supporting Ukraine in its striving for self-determination with respect to its political orientation was the right decision. The fact remains, however, that the new President Poroshenko also originates from the old system. One of the mainstays of that system is a dizzying level of corruption, which prevents reforms from making a sustained impact in Ukraine. It is not right for democracy to depend on how much a person can or has to pay for a seat in parliament. If the G7 wishes to support Ukraine on its chosen path and take advantage of the fact that Ukrainian oligarchs are showing greater willingness to compromise out of fear of a Russian takeover, then now is the time to act. Conceivably, an anti-corruption plan could be devised in collaboration with Kiev, with regular implementation checks over the next five years. This could be linked to financial incentives for Ukraine, as already put into practice by the International Monetary Fund in connection with its loans before the crisis in Ukraine.



Controversial, but fundamental questions make the top of the agenda: refugee and development policies, the relationship to Russia and a strong community of values. During its G7 presidency, Germany takes on special responsibility. | Source: Crown, The Prime Minister's Office, flickr ©@©©.

4. Refugee relief: The fight against terrorist Islamism will be an important point on the agenda in Elmau. A declaration of commitment to better cooperation in the fight against terrorism is highly likely. But this must go hand in hand with efforts to eliminate the breeding ground for terrorist Islamism. Terrorist organisations exploit the suffering of civilians in conflict areas to recruit new "fighters". Can one really afford not to significantly step up the aid funds invested in refugee relief in view of the heightened threat levels in the G7 countries? Aside from necessary military measures, measures of development assistance are therefore urgently needed. The situation of refugees in conflict areas and in refugee camps must be improved by providing food aid, medical supplies and, above all, schooling. That is the only way to eliminate the breeding ground of terrorist Islamism. Germany will have to show leadership in this area by initiating large-scale action as well as mobilising the necessary financial underpinning. In addition, Jordan, Libya and Turkey, countries that currently have to cope with the massive influx of refugees, as well as Egypt as the regional power should be invited to attend the G7 summit and be involved in the initiative.

Pandemic/Ebola action plan: One further important point is and must be the fight against pandemics such as the highly infectious disease Ebola that is currently rampaging Western Africa. The World Health Organization initiated an action plan to fight the disease back in July 2014 with a budget of 100 million U.S. dollars. The U.S. has announced the dispatch of at least 3,000 soldiers to the affected region. Germany should also make available medical expertise and additional funds for combating this crisis. A pandemic/Ebola action plan will need to be devised at G7 level and its implementation initiated as soon as possible, because the danger of the disease spreading to further countries has not yet been averted.

There are areas where Germany can exercise its new international responsibility without departing from the traditional course of its existing foreign and security policy. 25 years on from the fall of the Berlin Wall, Germany must now prove through its actions that it is up to the challenge.