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Chapter 7
The EU Representation in the G8

Judith Huigens and Arne Niemann

Since 1977, only two years after the first G7 summit in Rambouillet, France, Europe has been officially represented at every summit, a fact often overlooked by the general public and scholars alike.[1] Despite its longstanding presence at the G7/G8 summit, the European Union has remained the odd one out, for a number of reasons. First of all, and most notably, the EU is the only regional institution among a select group of nation-states considered a fully fledged participant at the summit. The G8 formation, with France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, the United States, Canada, Japan, and Russia, has always been an issue of debate (Merlini 1994; Silvestri 1994). Nonetheless, EU participation has, apart from some disagreement over the initial invitation in the 1970s, never been disputed since. Second, there is the issue of dual representation, stemming from the fact that, up until recently, the European Union could be represented by, at some occasions, as many as six representatives: the four European G8 members, the European Commission and the country holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (Penttilä 2009, 38).

This chapter investigates the ambiguous nature of this unique representation and its effect on the contribution of the EU to the G8 debate. It claims that the dual structure of EU representation results directly from the characteristics of the EU itself as well as those of the G8. The EU's quest for supranationalism makes the presence of both the Commission and member states inevitable, but this complicated situation is in fact not very complicated in the G8 context.

This analysis begins with a brief introduction to the concept of EU international representation. This will be followed by an overview of the development of the aforementioned representation construction (especially of multiple EU actors in the G8), including the (advantageous and problematic) implications culminating from this situation.[2] Finally, the chapter ends with two case studies that illustrate some of the important challenges and opportunities of EU representation as well as some of the conditions that determine effective EU participation within the G8.

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[1] See, however, see Susan Hainsworth (1990), Heidi Ullrich and Alan Donnelly (1998), and (Fischer 2001). In the early years, the European Community was represented by the president of the European Commission, who was later joined by the rotating president of the European Council.

[2] This chapter draws on interviews conducted with officials of the European Union member states and European Commission and also members of the G8 delegations.

Conceptualizing the international representation of the EU

In order to grasp the EU's unique position at the G8 summit, it is first necessary to understand the nature of these two very different international bodies. Their distinctive characteristics explain not only EU participation, but also the ambiguous nature of EU representation. Both the informality of the G8 and the supranational nature of the EU contribute to this delegation structure, which can be explained using principal-agent theory.

The G8 is often framed as a story of states. Born out of frustration with the inefficiency and slow decision making of existing international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank, the initial meeting was intended to bring together a small party of powerful state leaders for a 'direct, unscripted, unbureaucratic exchange between a few heads of government' (Bayne 1995). The original composition has changed somewhat, by extending invitations to Canada in 1976 and Russia in 1997, and later including the so-called 'Outreach Five' or 'Group of Five', as well as by expanding the ministerial meetings (Kirton 1999, 51). Nonetheless, the G8 remains primarily a gathering of state governments. The G8 can not be considered an international governmental organization (IGO), however, as it does not fit all necessary characteristics: a formal treaty, voluntary membership, a permanent character, a distinctive constitutional structure, common interests, and a formal conference (Fischer 2001). G8 members have joined the group voluntarily to cooperate on common interests, and the summit has taken place every year since 1975, but it lacks those more formal characteristics (Kirton 2004, 453).

The dubious nature of the G8 as an international organization suggests it is rather a 'quasi-intergovernmental organization' or an 'informal group' (Fischer 2001). This kind of international organization can also be considered 'concert diplomacy', which is based on informal rules and serving mainly to coordinate policy (Schwegmann 2001). Concert diplomacy springs from growing interdependence and density of institutional relations between states, which cause a security community to develop. Concerts remain informal, with a core that is hard to pinpoint. They revolve around comprehensive deliberations and negotiations among powers that respect each others' rights. Due to its lack of mandate, fixed agenda, or bureaucratic infrastructure, the G8 can act very quickly and decisively when its members agree (Weiss 2006, 2).

If the G8 holds a position on one end of the institutionalization spectrum, the EU occupies a spot at the opposite end. The EU fits the aforementioned criteria for IGOs. Not only does it have a formal treaty and a distinctive constitutional structure, but the EU even goes beyond these characteristics by also possessing all the qualities of a supranational IGO. It is bound by decisions

approved by a majority; independent organs within the organization have binding authority; the institution has the authority to pass legal acts applying directly to member states, which can influence individual citizens directly; and it has obligatory jurisdiction in case of conflict (Fischer 2001, 136).

That supranational nature deems EU's presence at the G8 summit necessary. Simultaneously, the conceptualization of the G8 as an informal group or concert helps explain how, in a setting that seems so adamantly state-centric, the EU as a regional body has managed to obtain a seat at the table. Without any clear rules excluding the EU, and based on principles of normative consistency and effectiveness, the G8 had no good reason to exclude the EU. The informality of the G8 facilitated EU participation. However, while the lack of rules and regulations offered the EU the opportunity to join in, the supranational nature of the EU itself made participation not only convenient but also necessary. After all, the most robust argument for EU participation is the fact that its member states have transferred a number of competences to the EU level, making it impossible for the individual states to make any agreements or promises on some issues. As the highest authority on subjects such as trade, the EU must be involved in global governance in order to ensure effectiveness. Not including the EU would thus negatively affect the legitimacy of the G8. EU participation thus contributes to the legitimacy and effectiveness of both the G8 and the EU (Hainsworth 1990; Lamy 1988; Ullrich and Donnelly 1998).

Not only did the characteristics of these very different international organizations result in EU participation, but they also shaped the distinct ambiguous structure of EU representation in this case. The EU's continuing inability to create a unitary international representation is once again facilitated by the informality of the G8.

With the foundation of the European Economic Union in 1957, a new and unique international player was born. Ever since, however, the EU has struggled with its international representation. After 50 years, the reality is still a pluralist and ambiguous hybrid entity, with strength in some contexts and marginality in others (Hill and Smith 2005). This patchy and uneven nature of representation is due to consistency issues, occurring in a number of contexts (Marsh and Mackenstein 2005, 71). One of the biggest issues stems from the diversity in competence in different areas, with the EU having full competence in common commercial policy, for example, and mixed, limited, or even non-existent competence in others.[3] Another challenge results from the fact that, even after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, international representation is

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[3] The principle of conferral ensures that the EU is inclined to act within the limits of the powers conferred upon it by the treaties and the objectives assigned to them therein (Dehousse and Coussens 2002; Tóth 2002, 1). The doctrine of parallelism on the other hand ascertains that only when internal competence is gained, the EU automatically gains external competence too (McGoldrick 1997, 42).

divided among different EU institutions (Penttilä 2009, 35). Depending on the subject or the discussion partner, the EU might be represented by the President of the European Union, the high Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the President of the Council of the European Union, the President of the European Commission, or any combination of the four (Cameron 2004, 159; Rosamond 2005, 465). And apart from the diversity among institutions, there is also diversity within, since the Council can be represented by 27 different member states and the Commission consists of 27 Commissioners, each with his or her own specific Directorate-General. Moreover, decision-making procedures and policy developments may differ by issue area, as do legal bases and available policy instruments (Soares 2005). Finally, there is the difference in extent to which the member states are willing to lose sovereignty(Marsh and Mackenstein 2005: 71).

And if internal dynamics were not enough reason for ambiguity, there are also external factors: pressures and constraints from other participants in the international arena for the EU to define its international policies more clearly and international developments that demand a European answer, sometimes resulting in rash solutions (Hill and Smith 2005, 61). Despite the fact that the EU explicitly aims for the creation of a coherent international identity, the variety of views on this identity creates a serious obstacle to the development of such an identity (13). In a way, the European Commission exemplifies the ambiguous nature of the phenomenon that is the EU. It is much more than an international secretariat, but not quite a government; its international role is defined by both supranationalist and intergovernmentalist elements (Egeberg 2003, 131). The Commission is one of the EU's main policy-making institutions, drafting most of the legislation. Internationally, the Commission formulates and negotiates on certain aspects of the EU's external relations, but only if the power to do so has been explicitly conferred to it (Groenleer and Van Schaik 2007, 971). In this international context, the European Commission represents the interests of the EU's interests rather than those of the individual member states. This means that, formally, the Commission constitutes an autonomous actor.

Most, if not all, of these inconsistencies also apply to the EU's participation in the G8. In an international forum with few rules, however, the EU can participate despite these challenges. Several inconsistencies can be considered problems of delegation and often are cases of incomplete, informal delegation of power from member states to EU institutions. Principal-agent theory, a reasoning that originally emerged in microeconomics, helps explain the delicate relationship between the principal and the agent that represents its interests (Dür and Elsig 2011, 328).

Generally, the member states — the principals — grant authority to the European Commission and the Council Presidency — the agents — to act on their behalf. The principal-agent approach, which is derived from rational choice theory, seeks not only to understand why delegation takes place but also to comprehend the policy consequences for any particular principal-agent relationship (Pollack 2006; Dür and Elsig 2011, 329). Given that EU representation in the G8 suffers from consistency challenges, principal-agent theory might clarify the position that the EU holds in this group. This approach is even more relevant because of the complexity of the relationship, with member states delegating power to EU representatives while also enabling several of them, namely France, Germany, Italy and the UK, to monitor the agent(s) as so-called 'attending' principals in the G8. Moreover, the informality of the G8 encourages an informal principal-agent relationship, leaving even greater room for possible 'cheap talk' and political pressure on agents from member state principals (Pollack 2006, 196).

Mutiple EU Actors in the G8

This section turns to the practicalities of the representation construction that result both from the informality of the G8 format, as well as the EU's struggle to attain international standing. This construction offers the several actors involved both challenges and opportunities. In the context of an informal principal-agent relationship, the European Commission has transcended the original intentions of its principals, while the influence of the European Council and the non-G8 member states has remained minimal (see Niemann and Huigens 2011).

The participation of France, Italy, Germany, and the UK in the economic summit in 1975 at Rambouillet was met with indignation by the other EU members and the European Community itself, which criticized the fact that some, but not all, individual states were present (Hainsworth 1990, 11). Prolific discussion within the European Community followed, over the issue of community representation versus that of certain member states acting individually (Ullrich and Donnelly 1998, 10). Smaller member states feared that decisions might be made without consulting them or reflecting their interests (Putnam and Bayne 1987, 149). Additionally, there were concerns that the summit might present the potential to rival (or even replace) 'the [European Community] as the principal entity to resolve and manage West European and transatlantic issues' (Hainsworth 1990, 14). Furthermore, as highlighted by Gaston Thorn, foreign minister of Luxembourg, those member countries that were not participating were concerned that they might become second-class members and lose the enhanced voice they had gained through community membership (Ullrich and Donnelly 1998, 18). Thorn also argued that the European

powers present at the summits as national governments lacked the legitimacy to act as 'ambassadors' of the European Community (Bonvicini and Wessels 1984, 174).

Opposition to this position came not from the non-European summit participants, but from the European instigators of the summit — France, Germany, and the UK (Garavoglia 1984, 14). France, under Valèry Giscard d'Estaing, took a leading role in the process and held the firmest preferences for European Community exclusion from summitry, advocating the state-centric view that only representatives of sovereign states had sufficient legitimacy and authority to participate at a summit and contribute to it.

It was not until March 1977 that an agreement was reached, after mediation by the European Commission and the European Parliament. The Commission would be represented in areas of its competence by two representatives, namely the President of the Council and the President of the Commission (Hainsworth 1990, 18; Ullrich and Donnelly 1998, 10). Meanwhile, the four existing G8 member states would participate alongside these European representatives. A so-called 'pooling of sovereignties' would occur on those issues of European Community competence, without a fixed or binding mandate (Hainsworth 1990, 13).[4] The profound disagreement led to a lowest common denominator solution — an 'informal contract' — with many contingencies left unspecified (Farrell and Héritier 2007; Hawkins et al. 2006; Tirole 1999). Both the G8 members and the smaller non-G8 members could thus pursue their interests through the use of control mechanisms and limitations to participation. The smaller member states attempted to stay in the loop as much as possible through insisting on involving the European Commission in regular consultations and substantial debriefings before and after G8 summits through the Committee of Permanent Representatives II (COREPER II), which consists of heads of missions. The Netherlands and Belgium, the strongest advocates of exclusive Commission representation, used these control mechanisms extensively (Hainsworth 1990).

Conversely, the European G8 members sought to restrict the position of their agents wherever possible by ensuring that the Council Presidency was always held by a G8 member at the time of the summit (Hainsworth 1990, 52). As a result, the Council was in effect not independently represented until 1982 (Hainsworth 1990, 11). Even then, the Commission was only granted participation on issues of its competence. Moreover, the four European participants' continued presence at the summit allowed them to 'police patrol' or directly monitor the agent (McCubbins

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[4] According to the European Commission, a mandate is not necessary, since no formal decision making takes place at the G8 summit and agreements are mainly political. Since the G8 has no legal mandate, there are also no voting procedures at the EU level. The legal instruments that are available to the commission are limited to directives and opinions and recommendations, as derived from summit agreements (Interview with Jooste Korte, a member of the European Union delegation to the G8).

and Schwartz 1984). The greater availability of information to these present or attending principals coupled with their inevitable immediate and direct influence over the agent privileged them over the smaller member state principals. These privileged principals could further expand their influence through other means. For example, as hosts they could exercise a measure of control over the levels of courtesy, recognition, and leeway afforded to the Commission through their management of procedures and agenda setting (Huigens and Niemann 2011).

Despite this precarious starting position of the EU delegation and the incomplete contract that was agreed upon, the European Commission was able to transcend the original intentions of its principals and become the main EU representative within the summit. Even though the Commission was initially invited only to discuss trade and North–South issues, in 1978 its participation was extended to all economic issues. When the focus of the summit shifted to more political topics, the Commission was also included in the discussions in 1981 regardless of competence.[4] The European Commission has in fact been described almost as a separate country in the way it operates. While the EU may not be a sovereign state like the other G8 members, it is generally treated like one at the summit. Its presence is not as a courtesy or for ceremonial purposes. Rather it is required for tackling the important global issues that are the priority of the G8. Other G8 members want the EU's involvement because of what it can contribute. Finally, the EU's performance and compliance, as measured by the G8 Research Group, has always been on par with that of other G8 members, suggesting that the EU has been successful as an autonomous delegate (Huigens and Niemann 2011).

The European Commission currently participates independently in all components that make up the summit structure. It sends its President, the head of cabinet (who serves as sherpa), and three sous-sherpas (for financial, political, and foreign affairs). In the course of the summit, the delegation remains separate from the other (EU) G8 members. It has its own administration, expertise teams, and media officers, conducts individual press conferences, and distributes its own press statements. As such, the European Commission is not connected to or dependent on any other G8 delegation in any of the summit activities or preparations. In view of distinct institutional resources, the Commission acts as the ninth member at the table. The informal contract of 1977 ensured limited institutionalized means of control for the non-G8 EU member states. The informative meetings prior and after the summits have diminished in importance, with the Commission now merely informing COREPER II on G8 aims. The only aspect where EU

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[4] Three factors contributed to the development of the European Commission position within the summit: the flexibility and informality of the G8; the evolving European integration process; growing capabilities, standing, and entrepreneurship of the European Commission. For more detail see Arne Niemann and Judith Huigens (2011, 428–29).

summit participation formally differs from that of the other G8 members is the fact that the EU cannot host a summit (Ullrich and Donnelly 1998, 11).

However, although the EU official participates in all summit proceedings, including preparatory meetings and informal elements, actual involvement differs by issue area. This variable Commission strength is due to diverging levels of competence as well as to other factors, such as experience, national interests, or international context. The G8 context tends to neglect legal boundaries, due to its informal and unscripted nature. Competences matter in the sense that they define political boundaries, but the flexible nature of the EU system of legal competences, in combination with the ad hoc and informal nature of the summit, enables the EU delegation to develop a unique dynamic according to subject. The Commission's influence has increased as its competences and experience have increased. A more elaborate illustration is offered in the next section.

Meanwhile, the position of the European Council representative is more problematic. It took six years for an independent EU representative to be present at the summit, in the shape of Belgian President Wilfried Martens in 1982. Nonetheless, the G8 aims to keep the group as small as possible by manipulating the date of the summit. Between 1977 and 2008, there were 23 mixed years in which the EU Presidency was held by both a G8 country and a non-G8 country. Of these 23 cases, the G8 chair decided 21 times to hold the summit during a G8 member's six-month Presidency of the Council.[5] This is a way to avoiding bringing in an 'unknown player' that would otherwise not be in the G8. If there is no other choice, the G8 will choose the country with the most experience (Belgium or the Netherlands, for example). When the Council is represented by an non-G8 member, that country has a purely ceremonial role'. It is not invited to any of the preparatory meetings and usually has very limited summit experience. It therefore tends to join forces with the Commission delegation. However, when a G8 member holds the Council Presidency, that separation disappears: as one official says, 'France may hold EU Presidency, but when it speaks, it speaks as France'. With regards to the European Council representative, there is no formal mandate or feedback system at all. The Presidency of the Council usually works according to its agenda as determined by that specific country.

The originally agreed 'parallel approach' left the question of who represented whom up in the air, and therefore never explicitly dealt with the issue of 'dual representation' (Penttilä 2003). With as many as six European representatives present at a summit table with only ten official seats, it is remarkable that the issue seems hardly pertinent for summit members (Huigens and

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[5] In that period, two summits (Tokyo 1993 and Evian 2003) were held in mixed years but during the presidency of a non-G8 country rather than during the presidency of the G8 member.

Niemann 2011). Generally, participants agree that the European Commission President represents first and foremost the Commission, and not so much the present or not-present member states. The Commission cannot represent the entire EU, which would mean its view is also the view of the UK, France, Germany, and Italy. The EU as such is therefore not represented; only the European Commission is. The individual member states, however, are not expected to represent common EU interests. Nevertheless, today there are few international issues on which the EU states have not already established a common position, which explains why, even in the abundance of formal means to enforce a cohesive EU position at the summit, often the same basic goals are still pursued.

Nonetheless, European bloc forming is not considered a problem by summit participants, as it is generally occurs only on certain issues, and not always along EU lines. Most G8 members agree that too much European unity could lead to the polarization within the G8 — the Europeans versus the rest — which would be counterproductive. If there was a united EU voice all the time, the Americans or the Japanese might simply decide only to deal with the European Commission, which would be unfortunate for the G8. In practice such complaints are rare, as was the case in 2008 when the united European position forced the pace on the issue of climate change and the Japanese delegation openly expressed reservations about 'the number of Europeans at the table'. But as such alignments tend to vary across time and issue areas, European bloc formation has not emerged as a persistent area of contention. Thus the absence of consistent unity among EU members, partly facilitated by the flexibility of the G8 structure, preserves the construction as it is.

Despite its distinctive infrastructure, the European Commission, unlike individual EU G8 members, must always take into account the positions of the other EU G8 participants, and is therefore less likely to be pressing for the more radical approaches (Putnam and Bayne 1987). Furthermore, in practice the opinion of the Commission will never completely contradict that of the other EU members. For instance, it would not back a new proposal of one member prior to other EU members doing so. Division among the ranks of the EU members is possible, and the Commission does choose sides, but only after at least one other EU member has expressed support for that side. This means that the EU will not act unilaterally, but will act in most cases with the support of at least two European G8 members. In contrast, individual member states do not hesitate to act independently.

Hence, the informal contract of 1977 did not conclusively deal with the disagreements that arose among the different groups of principals. As such, the developed representation construction was not so much a conscious decision as it was more a gradual development,

resulting directly from internal EU developments and facilitated by the flexible nature of the G8. The unique composition of EU representation within the G8 is thus the outcome of a supranational body represented within a flexible non-binding forum.

Case Studies: The Challenges and Opportunities of EU Representation within the G8

To illustrate the challenges and opportunities presented by the specific structure of EU representation in the G8, two specific issues are more thoroughly discussed here: nuclear energy[6], and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and overseas development assistance (ODA). Both cases are characterized by diverging principal preferences and mixed competence, which means that both the EU and the member states have competence but the EU can impose binding rules upon member states and they may not implement measures that are not in accordance with EU objectives (Leal-Arcas 2001). As such, the issue of dual representation is particularly pronounced in these cases. In the case of nuclear energy, diverging principal preferences and dual representation have hampered the European Commission's representation, but in the case of ODA its presence alongside its divided principals has resulted in a proactive and independent Commission.

The issue of nuclear energy has been disputed within the EU for decades, making it particularly difficult for the Commission to make any international statements on the subject. In 2000, the Commission released a green paper tentatively declaring nuclear energy a risky and undesirable source of energy (European Commission 2000). At that time five out of the eight member states with operating nuclear power stations had started phasing out nuclear energy, including Italy and Germany, while the UK remained neutral on the issue and France and Finland remain positive (De Esteban 2002, 1). More recently, however, most of the opponents of nuclear energy have changed position, reversing their strategies and even planning new reactors to enhance energy security and reduce carbon dioxide emissions (Wood 2010, 317). Germany remains one of the few adversaries of nuclear energy, and announced its decision to take all its nuclear plants off line by 2021 and phase out nuclear power entirely by 2022 (Speigel Online 2011). In the meantime, the European Commission released more green papers on the issue of energy security, emphasizing the need for alternative energy sources but avoiding direct statements on the use of nuclear energy (European Commission 2006, 2007). Indeed, the issue of

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[6] Our research on this issue predates the 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident.

nuclear energy remains a member state issue, despite the fact that competence is formally shared between member states and the Commission.

At the G8, the issue of nuclear energy has presented the European Commission with considerable challenges. With one G8 (powerful) principal — Germany — so adamantly opposing nuclear energy and others — France, the UK, and Italy — (strongly) supporting its inclusion in EU/G8 energy strategies, the principal preferences are so divergent that a united EU position becomes impossible. Although the individual EU member states can still actively participate despite disagreement, this becomes very difficult for the EU delegations. Moreover, some of the more powerful principals are 'attending principals', thus well equipped for monitoring and 'sanctioning' the agent. The European Commission has even kept a low profile given the presence of a member state 'heavyweight' constraining EU action, not expressing itself strongly, proactively, or independently on the issue. In line with G8 summit procedures, the Commission and the Council would never be excluded from any nuclear energy debates, given that the G8 is about effectiveness, participants aim to talk to those in charge. Since the European Commission is neither an expert nor a decision maker when it comes to nuclear energy, its position at these discussions is marginal. Double representation becomes a challenge in this case, because the attending principals tend to advocate their individual perspective as opposed to a united European position.

The second case study is characterized by a complex actor constellation. The UK, the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and the European Commission favour the progressive targets of the MDGs and have shared the most ambitious commitments. On the other hand, the member states that have joined the EU since 2004, together with earlier members Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece, have seemed less enthusiastic and more moderate in their goals. Germany, France, and a few other countries take an intermediate position. Although their goals and real commitments are somewhat more modest than the progressive group, their policy rhetoric is far-reaching (G8 Research Group 2007, 2008a). Against this backdrop, the Commission adopted a strong, proactive, and independent role, which it carried over to the G8. At the UK-hosted Gleneagles Summit in 2005, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso was the only leader to mention the MDGs in his press conference (G8 Research Group 2006, 28). Before the German-hosted Heiligendamm Summit in 2007, Barroso criticized member states such as Germany for counting debt relief to meet aid targets (G8 Research Group 2007, 132). In addition, at the Japan-hosted Toyako Hokkaido Summit in 2008, it was the Commission that encouraged non-European G8 countries to match EU targets (G8 Research Group 2008b, 130). Concerning the MDGs and ODA, even the more reluctant EU member states (including

Italy) and those with intermediate preferences (including Germany and France) have emphasized the importance of this issue and articulated significant ambitions (Rampal 2005; G8 Research Group 2008a)(Concord Europe 2008). Under such circumstances, it is more easily justifiable for the Commission to speak out and take advantage of member states' rhetorical commitments (Barroso 2008; G8 Research Group 2007). Indeed, given such exaggeration, the European Commission could take the opportunity to lead the G8, regardless of the conservative preferences of member states. The Commission could be seen use the platform afforded by the G8 to leverage its own internal EU agenda, using international pressure on the laggards in the EU to accelerate their efforts. In some cases, the Commission could act more self-confidently and independently in the G8 because of its status as a major international aid donor. The Commission could use not only the flexibility of the G8, but also the symbolism of the summit to pursue its own policy goals. Dual representation in this context was used to the advantage of the European Commission, which managed to exploit the member states' 'cheap talk'.

These two examples illustrate both the challenges and the opportunities that the dual representation structure of EU representation in the G8 holds. An experienced European Commission can sometimes use the G8 flexibility and media exposure to its own advantage, but when principals are strongly and unambiguously divided and Commission experience is limited, so is their influence at the summit. As such, dual representation can be a nuisance or a blessing, depending on the circumstances.

Conclusion

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing once recommended not bringing up the issue of European representation at the G7/8. 'We don't want to draw attention to the fact that there are four EU members at the G8 table and that the EU is there as well,' he said. 'It might cause instability'. While a closer look at the issue of EU representation in the G8 may raise some eyebrows, in the history of the G8 it has rarely caused any problems.[8] Participants have accepted the necessity of representation by member states as well as the European Commission. The actor that drew the short end of the stick was the President of the Council of the EU when represented by a non-G8 member state. Excluded from many of the supplementary summit proceedings, the Council plays a marginal role within the summit structure. Not only is dual representation necessary due to

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[8] One instance of friction was in 1990, when U.S. president George H.W. Bush expressed his annoyance about the tendency of the European countries to streamline their positions before the summit, making negotiations difficult for outsiders such as the United States or Canada (Silvestri 1994).

differing competence transferral, but it is also, at the same time, not considered problematic because of the loose G8 structure, in which leaders can be leaders and effectiveness is key. Overall, the informality of the G8 has tended to play to the EU's strengths. The EU has not clearly defined its international status yet, but the G8 might just be the perfect setting for it. The EU's participation is unhampered by the fact that it is not a nation-state. The informality of the G8 has meant that the question of what exactly the EU as such is doing at the summit can be safely ignored. The two institutions seem generally well suited: the EU can improve the effectiveness of the G8, and the G8 reinforces the international legitimacy of the EU and also provides a forum where the EU can develop its international standing.

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