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**Breaking Global Deadlocks:
A Canadian Track 1.5 Success**

A Policy Update Paper

By

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Introduction

One drizzly grey morning in February 2009, in a high-ceilinged room in Lancaster House in London, a small group of Canadian and American “think-tankers” convened a meeting of international experts with Gordon Brown, Prime Minister of Great Britain. This was a rather unusual gathering, including, at the request of the British Cabinet Office, a collection of foreign non-governmental specialists providing advice on how the British Government might approach the upcoming G20 summit meeting.¹ This consultation represented a quintessential exercise in Track Two diplomacy in a post-imperial setting.

In December 2008, the Canadian International Council published the first paper in its series, *Canadian Foreign Policy in a Changing World*. That paper, by Professor Peter Jones of the University of Ottawa, was entitled “Canada and Track Two Diplomacy.” It identified and outlined, “for an informed but non-specialist audience,” the critical questions in the Track Two field; analyzed three case studies of Canadian-facilitated Track Two projects; and went on to address the key issues that would face Canada if its government decided to expand the country’s capacity to provide leadership in a range of Track Two initiatives.²

This paper, intended for a similar audience, adopts much of the intellectual framework provided by Professor Jones to review and analyze the results of the ongoing, Canadian-led Track Two effort that led to the February meeting in London. This project was designed to encourage the reform of some of the most important institutions and processes of global decision-making. Specifically, the attempt has been made to test the hypothesis that a more inclusive, systematically prepared, grouping of government leaders would have greater success at breaking key global deadlocks than the existing array of international institutions, and in particular the G8.

This undertaking began life in 2003 as the L20 project and is now known as the Breaking Global Deadlocks (BGD) project. It is an initiative originally prompted by then Canadian Minister of Finance, Paul Martin, and subsequently managed through a partnership between two Canadian think-tanks -- the Centre for Global Studies (CFGS) at the University of Victoria, and the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI).³

By November 2008, the Martin idea had become a reality when, in one of his last significant acts, President George W. Bush called together the leaders of the Group

¹ For an account of the February 9, 2009 meeting (and a list of participants), see <http://www.l20.org/libraryitem.php?libraryId=42> . The convening organizations were the Centre for Global Studies, the Centre for International Governance Innovation, and the Brookings Institution.

² Jones (2008). This article accepts as a starting point for discussion Jones’ reference to Joseph Montville’s definition of Track Two Diplomacy as – “unofficial, informal interaction between members of adversarial groups or nations with the goals of developing strategies, influencing public opinion, and organizing human and material resources in ways that might help resolve the conflict” -- see Montville and Davidson (1981-1982).

³ For a complete record of the L20/BGD initiative, see the project website at <http://www.l20.org/> . For a summary and analysis of the project’s activities up to 2007, see also Heap (2008). Also available in French, Heap (2009a) and Spanish, Heap (2009b).

of 20 countries: a body that previously had met only at the level of Finance Ministers and central bank Governors.⁴ In the intervening period more than 400 project participants from over 40 countries collectively played a significant role in shaping an international consensus around the usefulness of bringing together the government leaders of twenty (or so) countries to work together on devising solutions to pressing global problems, most recently, the financial and economic crisis facing the world community. By early 2009, the leaders of the project had made sufficient progress to be called upon by the British Prime Minister directly. This paper traces the main factors that led to this success, points to a number of major challenges awaiting the nascent G20, and suggests some broader lessons for Canada both with respect to the practice of Track Two diplomacy and with respect to its position within the emerging “G20 world.”

The Breaking Global Deadlocks Record

The Jones article pointed to a number of major questions that scholars have raised about Track Two diplomacy. Two are particularly germane to the BGD experience: how to determine the optimal moment for a Third Party to initiate a Track Two process, and how best to ensure the proper “transfer” of the results of Track Two processes into the official diplomatic realm.⁵

Many of the Track Two efforts analyzed by Jones were attempts to reconcile specific bilateral or regional disputes, some of them longstanding and volatile. By comparison, in the BGD project, the emphasis was on seeding international discourse as a whole with a general approach to significant institutional change. The aim was to shift the terms of the international debate around how best to ensure that the benefits derived from globalization would be sustainable and more fairly distributed. The shared perception was that the existing international machinery for making decisions was outmoded and ineffective, designed to deal with the problems of an earlier era. The hope was that a more representative group of government leaders might act as a global “steering committee” that could unblock key global deadlocks and prompt concerted action by the main regional powers including, in particular, such newly emerging economies as China, India and Brazil.

To return to notions of “readiness” or “ripeness” discussed by Jones, at first, BGD project participants had no specific target date or geographic focus. The intention was to generate and “stockpile” a set of practically oriented concepts and proposals that might remain “on the shelf” for a while, ready to be taken down and put into practice when the time was right.

A significant overriding constraint in this regard was the attitude of the George W. Bush Administration, with its penchant for unilateralism. Given this evident lack of

⁴ Numerical designations of groups of countries can be confusing. At the time of writing (April 2009), the group of leaders which Bush first called together is generally referred to in the press as the “G20”, even though in the past that label has been attached to a corresponding group of Finance Ministers and central bankers. For ease of identification, unless otherwise specified, the leaders’ grouping which has been the focus of the project described in this paper will be referred to as the “G20”.

⁵ The other three questions cited by Jones were whether a “generic” model of Track Two diplomacy can be usefully defined, what ethical issues and responsibilities attach to Track Two efforts, and how best to develop ways to measure the success of Track Two undertakings. Jones (2008) pp 5-11

interest in collective international action, project participants, not least among them many highly placed Americans, saw little prospect for enthusiasm for the G20 from the President or his foreign policy team. At the same time it was assumed that the United States would have to be a full party to any serious attempt to rework the architecture of global decision-making. So during the initial stages of the project, starting in late 2003, BGD work was regarded as a form of investment for the future. Little concrete progress was expected until the next US President was in place.

Nonetheless, project participants spent considerable time discussing the precise circumstances in which the proposal for a G20 might be accepted. It was clear that not every major international deadlock would be suited to direct intervention by government Leaders. In fact, as the project worked its way through a menu of potential summit agenda items, the number of appropriate topics seemed decidedly limited. Several necessary conditions were seen as required for an item to be deemed suitable.

- It should be a value-added initiative that could be agreed upon in a way not likely through other forums or organizations (e.g., the G8, or UN and Bretton Woods agencies).
- The emphasis should be on tangible results with substantial, quantifiable, broad-based benefits; realistic and acceptable financing mechanisms; and organizational feasibility.
- It should be amenable to a workable solution: a forward looking, focused suite of actions and promises that would offer a politically attractive win-win-win outcome for G20 countries as a representative group.
- A decision to address a specific agenda item would gain legitimacy through adequate representation, particularly through the participation of the United States and the major developing countries.

Once the subject-oriented project workshops began the criteria indicating the relevance for G20 engagement were sharpened.

- Addressing cross-cutting problems: a “G20 problem” should cut across the traditional “vertical” structures of government. National governments have invented new organizational structures to address issues that do not fit neatly into mono-ministerial silos. A high-level governance structure would be valuable in overriding and unblocking bureaucratic obstacles to effective links across these divisions at both national and international levels.
- Taking into account the dimensions of other international negotiations, important inter-related issues are often embedded in simultaneous, but separate, high level international negotiations. For example, concerns about national and global security or about global climate change run into questions about poor countries’ access to dual-use or clean technologies owned by rich countries; similarly, negotiations about trade in agricultural and food products run into poor countries’ perceptions of their vulnerability to trade barriers arising from stringent technological standards imposed by rich countries. Government Leaders would be better placed than sectoral Ministers to appreciate and act on these policy interactions.
- Promoting sustained follow-through: given the common shortfall between announced multilateral aspirations (even commitments) and delivery, there is a

strong case for a G20 mechanism that would put high-level “weight” behind efforts to achieve concrete action on broad-ranging, multi-year plans and proposals.

On the basis of an exhaustive, multi-year review of possible topics for an initial G20 agenda, the list that emerged was quite short:

1. a specific element of international health, possibly management of the avian flu or another pandemic;
2. climate change/energy security; and
3. nuclear proliferation and the nuclear fuel cycle.

Contrasting Experiences in Bringing a Track Two Initiative to Life

As project participants systematically worked their way through the various aspects of the G20 approach, it was generally agreed that the precipitating factor for change would have to be a crisis on an international scale. Absent of such a major triggering event progress on restructuring or superseding the G8, to say nothing of reforming Security Council membership or revising the governance practices of the IMF or the World Bank, was unlikely.

Two sets of crisis-related circumstances arose in the course of the project that might have been expected to give rise to government agreement to adopt the G20 model. The first occurred in 2005, and involved international concern over infectious disease. The second occurred in 2008 and continues to this day: the sub-prime loan crisis that mushroomed into the worst international financial and economic meltdown since World War II. In one case recourse to a new G20 was not considered necessary; in the other case it was. It is worth reviewing the differing outcomes in the two instances.

(a) Avian influenza

To begin with the 2005 incident. From the project’s inception health was the subject area that seemed to fit most comfortably into the notion that an initial G20 meeting should respond to a development with global dimensions and potentially significant economic or social impact. Under this general heading concerns about the ways in which national and international authorities dealt with infectious diseases struck an especially resonant chord.

In his scenario piece prepared for the February 2004 project launch meeting, Tim Evans Assistant Director-General of the World Health Organization, outlined three possible areas of G20 engagement: country or regional health crises; neglected global health priorities; and leadership lacunae. Under the second heading he listed preparedness for infectious epidemics.⁶ Health emerged from the launch meeting as a probable G20 agenda item.⁷ On this basis the project’s San Jose Costa Rica workshop in November 2004 examined global infectious diseases and adjudged

⁶ Evans (2004) p 4

⁷ Ottawa I pp 7, 24. The records of the various meetings and workshops in the L-20 project will be referred to or quoted from throughout this text. For ease of reference, these reports have been listed in the Appendix, each with a short-form identifier based on the location of the meeting. Citations refer to these identifiers, e.g. “Bellagio, p 3”. The full text of all meeting reports can be found at <http://www.l20.org/publications.html> .

them a very promising topic for leaders to discuss, although participants wanted a balance to be struck between the focus on infectious disease and the broader public health approach to addressing them.⁸ The February 2005 stocktaking meeting confirmed that the emphasis should be on preventing and/or managing pandemics.⁹

By the time of the project's May 2005 workshop in Geneva, specifically dealing with pandemics, the focus had been sharpened and the level of alarm ratcheted up. The world had seen the impact of the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003, as the disease originated in Asia and quickly spread to the West, causing hospitals to be quarantined in places as normally "safe" as Toronto. In addition, the threat of avian flu now loomed large – use of the term crisis seemed justifiable.

The potential economic impact of a more serious influenza outbreak was staggering. One of the background papers for the Geneva meeting estimated that even a relatively "minor" influenza pandemic, infecting just 0.5-1.0% of the world population (up to 65 million people), would probably see economic losses run from \$1-2 trillion per year over a period of two to three years (based on current GDP data). This would represent some 5-6% of world GDP. The authors added that even a "small" Asian flu pandemic could lead to losses in Asia's annual GDP of \$150-200 billion.¹⁰

The Geneva workshop concluded that in general authorities around the world were unprepared. There were huge gaps in surveillance activities, vaccine stocks were inadequate, and there were drastic medical personnel shortages. Specifically, with respect to the avian flu, where the concern centred on the movement of disease from an animal to a human host participants confirmed that there were no "bridges" between public health and agricultural veterinarian experts, and that veterinarians tended not to be included in surveillance systems.¹¹

It would seem on the merits of the substance that at least one of the agenda items for an initial G20 meeting should be "pandemics," or perhaps more precisely "avian flu;" moreover, the timing seemed right with political pressure building on leaders to be seen as fully engaged with the (apparently) imminent threat of epidemic disease. Even the occasion for an informal first attempt was presenting itself with all the world leaders scheduled to travel to New York in September 2005 for the United Nations' World Summit. Surely, around the margins of this event, the embryonic G20 could stir into life.

The May 2005 workshop in Geneva was already unusual in terms of who was in the room: in addition to senior officials from the World Health Organization (WHO), a senior official from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) attended. This was a real accomplishment because WHO and FAO officials rarely met, although to deal with avian flu a high degree of coordination between officials dealing with animal and human health was clearly called for. Also present were an American Assistant Secretary of Health plus his staff, a senior official from the Indian Council for Medical Research, two senior representatives from the Chinese health ministry (plus the

⁸ San Jose p 8

⁹ Ottawa II pp 3, 5

¹⁰ Rossi and Walker (2005) p 21

¹¹ Geneva p 1

number two from their Geneva mission), and one of the Canada's Assistant Deputy Ministers of Health. This was a group that, in theory, could make things happen.

At the conclusion of the Geneva workshop it was agreed that Canada and WHO would jointly draft a paper on the state of global preparedness to deal with the avian flu. The paper would be circulated internationally. The WHO/Canada paper would include options, recommendations and a number of concrete actions that leaders could take. Assuming broad acceptance the paper might serve as the basis for a breakfast meeting of twenty leaders on the margins of the September 2005 UN World Summit in New York. At this stage the non-governmental organizers of the Geneva meeting, CFGS and CIGI, withdrew.

Canadian authorities considered this proposal that, at one point, included a suggestion from WHO that Canada demonstrate its commitment by publicly committing a significant sum to the global effort. At the same time officials in international organizations and national governments, including Canada's, continued their consultations on how best to respond to the avian flu threat.

In the end other more standard intergovernmental processes produced sufficient momentum that the G20 alternative was not seen to be necessary. This, in turn, meant that from the perspective of the BGD project the appropriateness of avian flu as a potential initial agenda item obviously fell away, at least for the moment, since the most critical criterion confirmed throughout the workshop discussions was that issues should not be brought to leaders that could be resolved successfully elsewhere.

Instead on September 14, 2005, in the course of an address to the UN Summit, President Bush announced an "International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza," that sought to pull together the somewhat scattered initiatives in this field. Reflecting its role in strongly encouraging international coordination, Canada announced that it would host a ministerial meeting within the month to discuss the risks of an avian flu epidemic.

On October 24-25, 2005, the Government of Canada duly hosted this meeting with the Health Minister in the Chair.¹² The meeting included delegations from thirty countries and representatives of nine international organizations (the heads of the WHO, the FAO and the World Organization of Animal Health all attended). The outcome was a comprehensive "Ottawa Statement" that catalogued "key policy priorities and actions that must guide international efforts to prevent, prepare for, and respond to an influenza pandemic."¹³ Prime Minister Martin welcomed the delegates noting that this was the first time that a global gathering of political and technical leaders had been convened to discuss the avian flu threat at the Ministerial level. He went on to state that

this gathering reflects, in my view, the imperative for a new multilateralism, the collaboration of developed and developing

¹² See press release retrieved June 26, 2006 at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/intactiv/pandem-flu/index_e.html.

¹³ Text retrieved June 26, 2006 from http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/nr-cp/2005/2005_fin_e.html

countries with a common interest, to work together toward urgent goals which no one nation can accomplish alone.¹⁴

So the specific G20 mechanism may not have been utilized, but the underlying requirement for effective and inclusive international coordination that motivated the G20 approach in the first place was met through other means. The initiative begun in May in Geneva was only one of many efforts at this time precipitated by the evident and growing avian flu threat. It did not lead to a meeting of world leaders, but it contributed materially to the collective international response to a new and important problem, and it was especially useful in bringing together senior WHO and FAO officials at a critical juncture; however, from that point on the established links among national officials were decisive in securing government decisions and driving government action.¹⁵

The episode highlights a second Track Two issue discussed in the Jones article: the question of how best to “transfer” results to traditional diplomatic channels. A major challenge for the non-governmental sponsors of Track Two initiatives is the calculation of when and how to inject their findings and views into the “official” debate over a given question. In the case of the aftermath of the Geneva workshop, CFGS and CIGI had established effective connections among a broad range of academics, experts, and former and serving national and international officials, but concluded that further prodding from non-governmental actors was not required; moreover, the timing of the workshop was propitious because public pressure for concrete action was rising. In the end there was no guarantee that the workshop’s conclusions would prompt an immediate positive response from government to the idea of a side meeting at the UN, especially when the issue was pressing and governments were jockeying for position to demonstrate leadership; indeed, no G20 meeting materialized. On the other hand the proposal from the workshop for direct intervention by Leaders gained more currency and the possibility of a G20 approach continued to acquire credibility as part of the standard international discourse on global decision-making.¹⁶

¹⁴ Text retrieved August 4, 2006 from <http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca> .

¹⁵ The account of the follow-up to the Geneva workshop is based on personal interviews with workshop organizers and senior WHO and Canadian officials – the anecdote appears in Heap (2008) pp 63–65.

¹⁶ Late in 2003, Klaus Schwab, the President of the World Economic Forum called for a new global group composed of ten developed nations, ten developing nations and the Secretary General of the UN to address twenty-first century challenges. This “P21” (Partnership 21) idea resembled, in simplified form, the G20 approach. For a slightly later account of the Schwab proposal, see the report in Business Line of a February 10, 2004 speech in India. Retrieved May 10, 2006 from

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2004/02/11/stories/2004021102130500.htm>

In June 2004, Jim O’Neill and Robert Hormats (the latter a sherpa or sous-sherpa for the first eight G7 summits) published an analysis in the Goldman Sachs series of Global Economics Papers in which they specifically endorsed Prime Minister Martin’s suggestions for a G20 at leaders level. See O’Neill and Hormats (2004) p 9.

In December 2004, the Report of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change weighed in.

There still remains a need for a body that brings together the key developed and developing countries to address the critical interlinkages between trade, finance, the environment, the handling of pandemic diseases and economic and social development. To be effective, such a body must operate at the level of national leaders.....One way of moving group of finance

In fact project organizers have always designed the BGD workshop series specifically with transfer in mind. Many workshop participants were either past or current senior officials, many of them with direct involvement in summit planning. In personal terms particularly valuable “targets of opportunity” were the current “sherpas” of key countries.¹⁷ Even when these individuals were not attendees at project workshops they were regularly kept abreast of the latest thinking always with an eye to the schedule of preparatory meetings for the next G8 summit. After the Gleneagles G8 Summit in 2005, to which five emerging economy leaders (China, India, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa – the G5) were invited as “guests,” the target group of potential sherpa contacts expanded. Indeed the project findings and linkages turned out to be quite useful to G5 country officials as they navigated a rapidly evolving situation.

Another avenue through which the BGD project’s ideas could penetrate the official world was existing multilateral institutions, and especially the OECD. From 2006, the new OECD Secretary General, Angel Gurría, a former Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Finance, found the project’s work helpful, and a succession of its workshops and related meetings were held under OECD auspices. Finally, the project benefited originally, and subsequently, from the role of the Canadian Prime Minister, Paul Martin. For as long as he was in office (i.e. until February 2006), Mr. Martin made a point of raising the G20 concept with his counterparts as he met them, and he was extremely generous in relaying back to CFGS and CIGI the gist of the views of other government leaders. Since 2006 he has remained fully supportive, and frequently includes pro-G20 comments in his public statements.

Overall the project has attempted to remain as “wired in” to governments as possible. The degree to which individual officials have felt able to respond has varied over time and among countries, but a significant effort has been expended in trying to keep BGD ideas in the conceptual mix as practitioners consider potential reforms to the mechanisms of global governance. To return to the nomenclature described in the

ministers... United Nations Report (2004) p 73 -- Brent Scowcroft, former National Security Advisor to Presidents Ford and George H.W. Bush, was a member of this panel.

On January 27, 2005, the Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy published a report called “Governing Globalization – Globalizing Governance”. This unusual Process was created jointly by the Finnish and Tanzanian Governments in December 2002 to promote the involvement of Southern and civil society perspectives on global policies “...in search of novel and empowering solutions to the dilemmas of global governance”. The January 2005 report reflected one track of the Process and featured a proposal for a “representative summit for economic stewardship”. Specifically, the report recommended:

...the replacement of the G-7/8 with a broader grouping, a G-20 (or thereabouts) annual summit of the heads of leading governments from the North and the South. This informal leader-level group should assume a sense of responsibility for the functioning of the world economy and its principal institutions. Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy (2005) pp 16-20 -- the report went on to suggest that the group be supported by a troika of past, present and future chairs, a systematic “sherpa” process for preparing meetings, and an extensive prior dialogue to develop membership criteria.*forward may be to transform into a leaders’ group the G-20*

¹⁷ The term “sherpa” refers to the senior government official who acts as the personal representative of a Government Leader during preparations for a Summit meeting. Often this official is the permanent head of the country’s Foreign Ministry. “Sous-sherpas” (usually one official each from the Foreign Ministry and the Finance Ministry) assist the sherpa.

Jones article,¹⁸ the BGD project might be characterized more accurately as Track 1.5, as opposed to Track Two, reflecting the closeness of the project's proponents to governments – hence the title of this article.

(b) The global financial crisis

From its inception, the project considered the question of whether a new G20 grouping could usefully address and ameliorate the world's periodic financial and economic crises. After all the body that became the G7/8 had come together originally in 1975 in the wake of widespread economic instability, and the broadened G20 group of finance ministers and central bankers had been established in 1999 after a decade of country level financial failures. Not surprisingly one of the six scenario papers prepared for the project's launch meeting in February 2004 concerned the management of financial crises.

The scenario paper, *Would the Outcomes of a G20 Process Differ from those of the G7?*, was written by Ariel Buira, the Secretary-General of the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-Four on International Monetary Affairs and Development (known as the G24): a group of developing countries that work together on monetary and development finance issues.¹⁹ Buira concluded that the addition of major developing countries to the G7 would broaden the leaders' agenda and lead to improvements in the workings of the international economy. Among the topics that the G20 could address were global payments imbalances; counter-cyclical policies; managing financial market volatility; international liquidity, and Special Drawing Rights allocations; and commodity shocks. There was disagreement among participants over the likelihood of overcoming the strong Northern bias of existing international financial institutions, but some saw hope that an expanded leaders' group would bring more accountability and greater representativeness to deliberations over the key issues Buira enumerated.

A second paper on a related subject was prepared for this meeting, *The Orderly Resolution of Financial Crises* by Ngaire Woods, Director of the Global Economic Governance Program and Fellow in Politics and International Relations at Oxford University.²⁰ She concurred with Buira's contention that developing country interests tended to be ignored by the G7, and she raised a number of questions about what sorts of decisions a G20 might make and how legitimate a body it might be. She also made the interesting point that although it was "obvious" to the G7 that managing a financial crisis was an issue for Finance Ministers, "this was not the case for emerging countries whose crises put in jeopardy every aspect of the social and political status quo, sometimes including the position of the head of state." Thus, in a G20 setting, there would be a strong rationale for addressing such issues at the Leaders level.

Ironically, the discussion at the project launch meeting assumed that financial crises would originate in developing countries. The possibility that a global downturn would be triggered by corporate incompetence and regulatory mismanagement of the world's leading economy was not foreseen.

¹⁸ Jones (2008) pp 10 -12. Track One is official diplomacy.

¹⁹ Buira (2004)

²⁰ Wood (2004)

On the basis of the launch meeting discussion a workshop on this general subject was included in the first series of in-depth examinations of potential G20 agenda items. The original title for the workshop, held in Mexico City in January 2005, was “financial crises.” Participants ultimately concluded that a better title for this potential G20 topic was “global economic security and prosperity.” The notion was that the G20 could help focus on social issues and broader policy directives, and give ideas on how better to manage global economic systems, although this subject might perhaps not be best suited for a first G20 meeting a G20 group might eventually take up the task of giving guidance and direction on a set of issues related to global economic security and stability. Many technical aspects would properly be left to other actors (i.e. ministers, central bankers and senior officials), but political pronouncement on roles and goals might be necessary to give the required impetus; however, on balance, project participants made the judgment that the likely reflex of Finance Ministers to defend their own policy “turf” made the issue an unlikely item for a first meeting of G20 leaders.²¹

Management of the international financial system did not re-appear as a BGD project focus until the end of the second series of workshops, specifically at the May 2006 meeting in Washington DC.²² On this occasion the workshop title was International Institutional Reform, and there was extensive discussion of the prospects for reworking the governance mechanisms of the Bretton Woods institutions, and especially the IMF. The timing and location of this meeting was important. The end of the Bush Administration was in sight so both Democrats and Republicans were on the hunt for arresting foreign policy initiatives that their candidates could espouse. In this period of a quickening American search for policy alternatives the Washington host organization was the influential Brookings Institution that had been conducting its own Global Governance Project in collaboration with CFGS and CIGI.

One of the main themes that emerged from this workshop was a sense of institutional drift in the face of a rapidly evolving global economic environment. Both the IMF and the World Bank were seen as having lost their way, the Doha trade round was languishing, and the G7/8 had little legitimacy as a representative leadership body. Participants debated technical issues such as how best to adjust the voting shares in the IMF and politico-strategic questions such as how the elements of a potential “grand bargain” might be developed to make governance reform possible, but the eventual consensus was that only a major crisis could break the evident gridlock.

At this point the BGD project turned its attention to other issues; the prospect that the key institutions of global decision-making in the financial field would muster sufficient collective will to reform themselves seemed remote. Accordingly, project organizers turned to an important deadlocked issue, climate change, in an attempt to determine whether this subject might be amenable to resolution at the head of government level.

Within a year events, including the collapse of the American housing market, conspired to generate just the sort of crisis that project participants had assumed would be necessary to prompt significant institutional change. By the fall of 2008,

²¹ Mexico City p 5

²² Washington p 1 et seq

urged on by the British and the French, the Bush Administration came to believe that the dimensions of the financial and economic debacle were such that a meeting of the G20 group of countries was required at Leaders level. The first G20 Summit duly occurred in Washington DC on November 14-15, 2008. In addition to providing a degree of reassurance that a reasonably representative group of countries were addressing a rapidly deteriorating economic situation with seriousness, perhaps the most important outcome of that meeting was the decision to hold a second G20 Summit, this time in April 2009 in London. The G8 still exists, and no doubt will for some time, but the shift to the larger coordinating body is underway, and may have taken on an irreversible momentum.

So, why did the 2005 infectious disease concern not result in the first G20 meeting, while the 2008 economic collapse did? Clearly the BGD project itself cannot take primary credit or blame in either case, although it played an enabling role in fostering serious consideration by officials and politicians of the need to an alternative to the G8. The simplest answer is probably the closest to the truth: the financial and economic meltdown has been so widespread and damaging that government leaders have had to be seen to be cooperating at the highest level. Presumably if the avian influenza outbreak had actually swept through East Asia's largest cities and threatened North America and Europe the political demand for action would have resulted in Leaders coming together just as they are now to try to rebuild the global economy. As it happened that epidemic never occurred and the necessary pre-condition of a global crisis did not eventuate.

Just as BGD participants anticipated only a major international disaster requiring the brokering of a global, multi-sectoral "grand bargain" could jolt governments into seriously contemplating institutional change (largely because the setting within which the key states could negotiate such a collection of complex trade-offs did not exist); however, based on recent developments at the London G20 meeting the pressure for change seems likely to sweep past the establishment of a G20 to include a fundamental re-working of the governance systems of the IMF and the World Bank, at which point even reform of Security Council composition may seem inevitable.

Elements of the Breaking Global Deadlocks Project's success

As the Jones article points out measuring the success of any given Track Two effort is challenging. This is no less true of the BGD project that, after all, is still ongoing. Conversely, project participants began their work with the clear sense that the machinery of international decision-making was outmoded and ineffective, and by extension that significant change was required. Recent developments suggest that this diagnosis was accurate; however, the question remains, how much did the BGD project help to shift the centre of gravity of "global opinion"?

While a quantifiable set of indicators might not be available, the following elements can be pointed to as areas of significant achievement or contribution by the project.

- Maintaining project focus over six years
- Establishing ongoing links with key government officials and politicians
- Demonstrating a hypothesis concerning the effectiveness of a more representative, well prepared, group of government leaders
- Working with an informal international network of think-tanks

- Sequencing work to take full advantage of the timetable of key international meetings, especially G8 Summits
 - Maintaining a practical orientation, focused on the most important global deadlocks
 - Influencing key players likely to shape US foreign policy
 - Taking account of the equity concerns of developing countries and addressing issues of transparency and legitimacy related to institutional reform
1. The project has maintained its focus over six years. In the words of the Jones article, project participants (more than 400 people taking part in more than 35 workshops/meetings) have been “in it for the long haul.”

Over that period, the idea that the G8 was insufficiently representative has gained traction in governmental circles. Great Britain was the host for the July 2005 Gleneagles Summit of the G8, and Prime Minister Blair took advantage of the privilege of the Chair to broaden the meeting by inviting five key developing countries – Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa. Not only did the “Five” issue a Joint Declaration at the beginning of the Summit²³ but, prior to it, they had worked with the “Eight” to establish a Dialogue on Climate Change, Clean Energy and Sustainable Development, a commitment to which was enshrined in the Gleneagles Communiqué.²⁴ In fact, the “G8+5” had been the moving spirit behind a meeting of Energy and Environment Ministers from twenty countries in March 2005, as part of the preparations for the Gleneagles Summit. This Energy and Environment Ministerial Roundtable produced the impetus for the Dialogue which Gleneagles itself eventually launched.

Once called together the G5 became a constant at G8 Summits, although with varying degrees of impact depending on the host country. Neither the Russians in 2006 nor the Japanese in 2008 dealt with their “guests” particularly adeptly, the former because the Russians wanted nothing to distract from their first opportunity to host a G8 meeting, the latter because of Japan’s ongoing concern about China’s growing regional predominance.

By contrast the outcome of the 2007 Heiligendamm Summit contributed to regularizing the role of G5. As a new form of a topic-driven High Level Dialogue, the Heiligendamm Process was meant to provide a Forum for more substantive discussions among the 13 countries, leading to regular meetings between ministers with various portfolios. The initial period of the dialogue was to focus on four issues:

- Promoting and protecting innovation;
- Enhancing freedom of investment through an open investment environment including strengthening corporate social responsibility principles;
- Defining common responsibilities for development with special regards to Africa; and

²³ Joint Declaration of the Heads of State and/or Government of Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa participating in the G8 Gleneagles Summit Introduction. Retrieved June 24, 2006 from <http://g7.utoronto.ca/summit/2005gleneagles/plusfive.pdf>.

²⁴ The Gleneagles Communiqué. Retrieved June 24, 2006 from <http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/summit/2005gleneagles/communique.pdf>.

- Sharing knowledge for improving energy efficiency and technology cooperation with the aim to contribute CO₂ emissions.

Despite this organizational superstructure the inequitable relationship between the “eight” and “five” was ultimately untenable. By the end of 2007, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa was undoubtedly speaking for all of the extra invitees when he remarked “We are indeed of one mind ... we can’t be put in a situation where we are asked to join in the dessert and miss the main meal.”²⁵

2. The project established ongoing links with key government officials and politicians.

The project’s workshops were attended by ranking academics from a range of developed and developing countries. Perhaps more importantly, attendees also included current and recently retired senior officials, many of whom had active links to, or part of, existing “sherpa” teams charged with preparing heads of government for summits. As individual Leaders began publicly to support G20-related approaches,²⁶ the project also reached out to their immediate advisors, and/or to individuals who were influential, some of whom no longer had official titles. These included Jean-David Levitte in France, Pedro Malan in Brazil, Andres Rozental from Mexico, Surin Pitsuwan, the ASEAN Secretary General, Lord Michael Jay and Lord Mark Malloch-Brown in Great Britain. In addition, project meetings have been attended by two sitting heads of government, Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada and Prime Minister Gordon Brown of Great Britain.

3. The project demonstrated the hypothesis that a more representative, well prepared, group of government leaders could generate an outcome on a given global deadlock that the G8 could not.

The issue area that the project took on in this regard was climate change/energy security. Over a series of meetings in 2007 and 2008, leading to a simulated summit, participants developed a viable “package” of measures that could have

²⁵ Paul Martin reflected on the absurdity of dealing cavalierly with the leaders of China and India in his autobiography “...the image of Hu Jintao, the president of China, and Manmohan Singh, the prime minister of India – leaders of the two most populous countries on earth, quite possibly destined to be the largest economies on earth within our lifetimes – waiting outside while we held our G8 meetings, coming in for lunch, and then being ushered from the room so that we could resume our discussions among ourselves, is one that stayed with me....Either the world will reform its institutions, including the G8, to embrace these new economic giants, or they will go ahead and establish their own institutions...” Martin (2008) p 358.

²⁶ For example, British Prime Minister Gordon and French President Nicolas Sarkozy. In July 2008, Sarkozy was quoted as saying “The G-8 needs to adapt to the 21st century...It needs to expand to demonstrate its fairness in decision making,” (http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/world-news/us-france-clash-over-g8-expansion-lead_10068479.html) and in September 2008, “The 21st century world cannot be governed with the institutions of the 20th century,” he argued that inclusion of today’s emerging powers is not just “a matter fairness” but a necessary condition for “being able to act effectively.” “We cannot wait any longer to enlarge the Security Council. We cannot wait any longer to turn the G8 into the G13 or G14 and to bring in China, India, South Africa, Mexico and Brazil” (http://www.acus.org/atlantic_update/sarkozy-calls-security-council-and-g8-expansion).

been elaborated to provide the basis for significant progress on these inter-linked issues.²⁷ The elements of this package deal have been conveyed to the responsible officials in most of the G20 countries.

4. The project worked with an informal network of think-tanks around the world.

Critical to the project's ability to convene key individuals was a network of counterpart organizations such as the Brookings Institution in Washington DC, the Global Economic Governance Program at Oxford University, the Brazilian Centro Brasileiro de Relacoes Internacionais, Deutsches Institut fur Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, Tsinghua University in Beijing, the Program on Energy and Sustainable Development at Stanford University, Center for Global Security Research at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Mexico's Council on Foreign Relations, Egypt's Council for Foreign Affairs, Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Affairs, and India's Centre for Policy Research.

Also vital was the willingness of the OECD and its Secretary-General, Angel Gurría to provide a forum within which G20-related concepts could be analyzed. The OECD has hosted three BGD meetings, has had its experts participate in most other workshops, and has provided background papers to project participants.

5. The project sequenced its work to take full advantage of the timetable of key international meetings, especially G8 Summits.

In addition to ensuring that project meetings produced findings that could be passed on in good time to sherpa teams, project leaders Gordon Smith and Barry Carin organized and attended briefings with government officials immediately prior to recent Summits. They met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sherpa teams in Brazil and Mexico, with the Chief Climate Change Negotiator and Advisor to the Japanese Prime Minister prior to the Hokkaido G8 Summit, at the request of the UK Cabinet Office with the UK sherpa team prior to the London G20 Summit (this meeting included the discussions with Prime Minister Brown mentioned earlier) and with the Italian sherpa team preparing for the 2009 G8 Summit.²⁸

6. The project's work was practically oriented and focused on the most important global deadlocks.

One of the project's accomplishments was to take the time necessary to analyze and rule out a broad range of potential topics that would not fit well on a G20 agenda, especially for an initial meeting. This ground-clearing exercise ensured that the project's focus was reality-based and potentially useful to practitioners. A good example is the project's subsequent work on a possible climate change/energy package.

²⁷ See the Breaking Global Deadlocks section of the L20/BGD website at <http://www.l20.org/nextsteps.php>.

²⁸ Accounts of these meetings can be found on the L20/BGD website at <http://www.l20.org/library.php>

7. The project took advantage of the investment period afforded by the refusal of the Bush Administration to contemplate meaningful change in the shape of global institutions.

The project ensured that it maintained its contacts across the US political spectrum. Among the American academics who participated several times as the project evolved was Anne-Marie Slaughter, who is now the Director of Policy Planning at the Obama Administration's State Department. Other current Administration figures who have been briefed on the project's findings include Susan Rice, the US Ambassador to the UN, Jim Steinberg, Deputy Secretary of State, Larry Summers, Director of the White House National Economic Council and Paul Volcker, Chair of the Economic Recovery Advisory Board.

Probably the most important recent opportunity to engage with prominent US policy practitioners and advisors came at an official Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Side Event in New York in September 2007.²⁹ Chaired by Paul Martin, this meeting to discuss the G20 approach was attended by Robert Rubin, Sandy Berger, Joseph Nye and Thomas Niles, as part of a group that included well-connected non-Americans such as Gareth Evans, Hernando de Soto, Antonio Guterres, Mohamed El-Ashry and Surin Pitsuwan.

8. The project took account of the equity concerns of developing countries and addressed issues of transparency and legitimacy related to institutional reform.

From its inception, the project examined issues of legitimacy, and especially the lack of representation of developing countries in global decision-making bodies. Ironically, if the G20 at Leaders level actually takes on the characteristics of an effective international steering group the requirement will grow for ensuring meaningful input from those on the "outside," whether states not at the table, or non-state actors with trans-national concerns. One of the BGD project's next focuses will be to address solutions to the problems faced by the various categories of the "excluded."

Lessons for Canada about Track Two diplomacy and the emerging L20 world

(a) Canadian Leadership of Track Two initiatives

As the Breaking Global Deadlocks project has demonstrated, Track Two efforts can provide a productive exchange: the participating or sponsoring government receives "free," non-binding consulting advice from a range of international experts, while those experts gain access for their ideas to influential decision-makers on a timely basis. The Chatham House rule setting provides a safe haven within which the undiscussable can be discussed without fear of attribution.

For a country like Canada, that finds itself on the edge of being left out of a rapidly evolving set of new global institutional arrangements, the attraction of fully supporting Track Two diplomacy as a "force multiplier" in support of its national interests seems evident. Canada needs to bring all its assets to bear, and those assets include a range of Track Two practitioners in think-tanks and universities across the country.

²⁹ Clinton Global Initiative Side Event, September 25, 2007. See project website at <http://www.l20.org/library/item.php?libraryId=31>

Accordingly, the proposals by Peter Jones that the Canadian Government should back an enhanced Track Two capability warrant serious consideration.

Based on the BGD experience the following comments could be made about the three elements to a Canadian Track Two strategy that Jones has sketched out.³⁰

First, with respect to funding, the BGD project drew on a variety of funding sources, many of them related to, or part of, government; however, as previously noted, this is hardly surprising since the BGD initiative was from its inception closer to Track 1.5 in the spectrum of Track Two activities. Indeed, it could be argued that the ability to generate significant government funding amounts to a market test of the usefulness of a given Track Two project, because the ultimate end user for a project's findings is likely to be that government (or group of governments). A combination of governmental and non-governmental funding would probably be ideal but, realistically, the impact of the current economic downturn on foundation endowments and private individuals probably means that Track Two proponents will have to focus for the immediate future on governments for much of their financial resource base.

Second, with respect to building a national Track Two capacity, the creation of a Centre of Excellence in this field might be helpful insofar as it develops a more systematic assessment of best practices, "what actually works," and provides updates on current initiatives, "what's going on." Training for Track Two work may be difficult to define and deliver: since in practice success in this field requires considerable previous experience, multitudinous past and current contacts, and a "feel" for how government works. One overriding characteristic of BGD participants, for example, whether they came from academic, civil society or governmental backgrounds, was that they were vastly knowledgeable. They had been around the block (several times), and they brought both expertise and perspective to the table. Certainly, Jones is undoubtedly correct when he emphasizes the concern that a Centre of Excellence should not be allowed to constrain the spontaneity and flexibility that lie at the heart of the successful Track Two initiative; moreover, while potentially helpful, an academically based Centre would absorb funding that might better be applied directly to Track Two efforts themselves.

Third, it may appear to be useful from an outside perspective to have a single focal point within the Canadian Government tasked with coordinating Track Two support. Heavily structured official involvement is likely to make partnership more difficult than it need be. As a practical matter, many key Track Two participants will be former officials who may need little assistance finding their way through the bureaucratic

³⁰ "First, in terms of funding, it is important that we identify and nurture all aspects of our ability to develop a national capacity for Track Two" – this recommendation includes the suggestion for a public/private consortium of funders -- Jones (2008) p 22. "The second element necessary to build a national capacity to support Track Two is an investment in training Canadians in Track Two, supported by systematic research" -- this recommendation includes establishing a centre of excellence in research and training on Track Two based within a university – Jones (2008) p. 23. "The third and final essential element of enhancing Canada's capacity in the field of Track Two would be a strengthened partnership between the community of practitioners, potential external benefactors and the government" – this recommendation includes the proposal for naming an Assistant Deputy Minister "focal point" in the federal government charged with monitoring all Track Two projects which obtain official funding – Jones (2008) p 24.

maze, since they often helped set it up, and having multiple departmental contacts may turn out to be a help rather than a hindrance in generating funding. Absent further examination of precisely what an ADM “focal point” would do inside government to increase the value-added that a Track Two exercise could offer, a degree of skepticism seems appropriate. A useful Track Two project, with its delicate pattern of matchmaking between people and ideas and between government “insiders” and government “outsiders” will make its way in the world whether or not a “focal point” exists in government, and the converse also applies.

A final word about the Track Two approach in general. Support for an activist, Canada-based Track Two, or better yet Track 1.5, set of initiatives could serve Canada well in the race to bring forward good new ideas, G20-related or not. Track Two projects are cost-effective ways of acquiring top-level international advice with no strings attached. They extend a country’s policy reach and afford multiple opportunities for shaping the international discourse and influencing key individuals. They provide a safe space for the fostering of heightened mutual understanding and for the careful examination of heretical, but useful, approaches to old intractable problems and new, complicated ones. New alliances can be explored, new concepts weighed, new networks established. Proposals can be thought through and if the time is not right they can be warehoused for future use all without public commitment or retrospective embarrassment.

(b) Canada and the emerging G20 world

In the best tradition of a Track 1.5 exercise, this article will end with some brief, unsolicited G20-related advice for the government that did much through its funding, and through making its officials and the good offices of its posts abroad available, to ensuring that the Breaking Global Deadlocks project was productive.

In the wake of the G20 London Summit there seems little doubt that the newly emergent powers of China, India, Brazil and the rest are taking their rightful places at the high tables of international decision-making. As David Sanger reported in a recent New York Times story

Mr. Obama’s aides would not say publicly that the Group of 20 had now eclipsed the role of the United States, Canada, Europe and Japan. But clearly, one said, “the idea of getting a bunch of Americans, Europeans and the Japanese into the room and issuing a communiqué – well, that’s over.”³¹

In these new circumstances, Canada faces a number of critical policy challenges, not least of which is to make sure that it does not slip out of the new G20 club itself. Both the Washington DC and London G20 Summits involved many more than just 20 people in a room. In fact with all of the extra countries; Spain, the Netherlands, representatives of regional organizations; ASEAN, OAU, officials from multilateral organizations; UN, IMF, World Bank, inter al; and assorted Ministers and central bankers, the newly minted G20 has turned out to be a shaggy and rather unwieldy beast. Pressures to walk the Summits back to a smaller, more personal chat among equals will be fierce, and Canada runs the risk of falling through the cracks, unless it comes up with some compelling alternatives of its own.

³¹ Sanger (2009)

In the absence of overwhelming military or economic power, Canada must build on its tradition of bringing good ideas into play; ideas that adequately reflect its own aspirations and interests, but which also contribute constructively to the collective international effort to bring order and fairness to a chaotic and unsettling world. If Canada does not stake out a claim for a seat at the top table others will do so in its stead,³² and clearly in circumstances where the rules of the global game are changing, Canada's interest lies in being one of the rule-makers, not one of the rule-takers.

Accordingly, there would appear to be at least six areas where a distinctively Canadian contribution would make sense for itself and others:

- First, Canada could take the lead in helping to map out the road between the G8 and the G20 – or at least the ongoing relationship between the two groupings. This work might entail making common cause with the South Koreans, hosts of the 2010 G20, and the French, hosts of the 2011 G8, as well as reminding the Americans, hosts of the fall 2009 G20, of the importance of keeping another North American presence at the table.
- Second, Canada could generate practical proposals for how to coordinate the G20's work across collections of inter-related sectors, such as the combination of climate change, energy security, trade and nuclear proliferation.
- Third, Canada could contribute much by elaborating ways in which the newly important G20 could operate in the most effective fashion (e.g. focusing on issues of appropriate preparation and follow-up). Alternatives to the current G8 practice of rotating secretariat responsibilities with the chairmanship might include either setting up a small permanent secretariat in a single country or moving to the troika method: management by officials from the past, present and future chairing countries.³³
- Fourth, in a related area, Canada could lead the process of establishing an international network of think tanks, whose work could support the activities of the G20. The work of this network would also be useful to non-G20 countries, many of whom have limited research and analytical capabilities.
- Fifth, the G20, and for that matter the residual G8, need to be placed in the larger context of international institutional reform. This means working on changes to other key decision-making bodies such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the Security Council.
- Sixth, the rise of the G20 brings with it the challenge of ensuring that those not at the table, whether states or non-state actors, are given adequate voice. Since Canada itself runs some risk of finding itself on the outside looking in it has a major vested interest in devising approaches, some perhaps rooted in the new information management and telecommunications technologies, that promote transparency, accountability and legitimacy with respect to global decision-making at the highest level.

³² Rieffel (2009) Rieffel presents a plausible case for Canada's removal from a leaner "core group" of countries which might take the place of the G20.

³³ See a number of interesting ideas for strengthening the G20 organizationally in a March 2009 study by the Center for American Progress – Straw et al (2009) p 14.

In this rapidly evolving setting, the Breaking Global Deadlocks project will continue to work with the Canadian Government in a Track 1.5 fashion to ensure that Canada's insights and contributions are given their due.

Appendix

Breaking Global Deadlocks Project Meetings

Date	Place	Subject	Identifier
October 26-27, 2003	Waterloo, Canada	Scoping meeting	Waterloo
December 9-11, 2003	Bellagio, Italy	Scoping meeting	Bellagio
February 29, 2004	Ottawa, Canada	Launch meeting	Ottawa I
June 8-9, 2004	Oxford, UK	Agricultural Subsidies & the WTO	Oxford
September 20-21, 2004	New York, USA	Post-Kyoto Architecture: Climate Policy	New York
November 11-13, 2004	San Jose, Costa Rica	Infectious Diseases & Global Health	San Jose
December 1-2, 2004	Alexandria, Egypt	Safe Drinking Water & Sanitation	Alexandria
December 12-14, 2004	Princeton, USA	Nexus of Terrorism & WMD – Developing a Consensus	Princeton I
January 29-30, 2005	Mexico City, Mexico	Financial crises	Mexico City
February 20, 2005	Ottawa	Stocktaking meeting	Ottawa II
May 12, 2005	Brussels, Belgium	New Multilateralism	Brussels
May 16, 2005	Geneva, Switzerland	Pandemics	Geneva
May 18, 2005	Berlin, Germany	Fragile States	Berlin
May 23, 2005	Tokyo, Japan	UN Reform	Tokyo
October 13-14, 2005	Stanford, USA	Energy Security	Stanford
October 30-31, 2005	Victoria, Canada	International Fisheries Governance	Victoria
November 10-11, 2005	Petra, Jordan	Improving Official Development Assistance	Petra
January 20-21, 2006	Livermore, USA	New Perspectives on Regimes to Control WMD	Livermore

Date	Place	Subject	Identifier
February 26-27, 2006	Princeton, USA	Financing Global Public Goods	Princeton II
March 7-8, 2006	Maastricht, The Netherlands	Furthering Science & Technology for Development	Maastricht
May 4-5, 2006	Washington, D.C., USA	International Institutional Reform	Washington

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