

JULY 2026

POLICY BRIEF

# ÉVIAN 2026

The G7's Flexible Reset – AI, Middle Powers, and Diplomacy Beyond the Summit Table



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*We take the 2026 G7 Summit in Évian-les-Bains as a case study for understanding how a leading existing multilateral organisation adapts to a more fragmented, technologically inflected, and multipolar world. We argue that the significance of Évian lies less in the summit agreements themselves than in what the summit reveals: a qualitative shift in governance away from exclusive summit diplomacy and towards more selective coalition-building, broader engagement with non-state actors, and the inclusion of strategically positioned middle powers.*

*Specifically, we highlight three shifts in governance practice.*

*The first-ever inclusion of frontier AI firms on the leaders' agenda demonstrates their emerging influence as a class of geopolitical stakeholders<sup>1</sup>.*

*The subsequent US–Iran MoU agreed in Versailles reflects an increasing trend in diplomatic engagement utilising more flexible and informal formats beyond those of the G7<sup>2</sup>.*

*The inclusive, even “outreach” model of Évian indicates a willingness and capability within the G7 format for more adaptable and wider-ranging patterns of international political coordination.*

*These trends provide evidence of what we call a developing framework of “flexible geometry,” whereby, in the context of established multilateral — albeit selective club — G7 formats, the politics of limited institutional membership increasingly extend their effective reach to a wider, though not fully inclusive, array of actors through various alliances, issue-specific cooperative frameworks, and opportunistic, pragmatic diplomacy.*

*While there may be pragmatic benefits in greater responsiveness and more effective tailoring and delivery, these changes raise profound questions about legitimacy, representation, and the future direction of global governance.*

*We suggest that Évian 2026 should therefore be understood not as a fundamental departure from precedent, but as a practical example of how institutions adapt within and to an evolving geopolitical context.*

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1. Nicol-Schwarz, K. (2026, June 17). “A signal of where power sits”: Trump and world leaders joined by OpenAI, Anthropic, Google at G7. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2026/06/17/g7-trump-ai-tech-leaders-openai-anthropic-google.html>

2. Moment Trump signs US-Iran agreement at Palace of Versailles. (2026, June 18). [Video]. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/videos/crm03y1xx2no>

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# I. INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE SCENE – ÉVIAN 2026 IN A VOLATILE WORLD

France assumed the 2026 G7 Presidency with a declared aim of reshaping the G7, in a fragmented world, into a platform for strategic convergence.<sup>1</sup> Hosting the G7 Leaders' Summit for the second time in the southern lakeside town of Évian-les-Bains, on 15–17 June 2026, summit participants returned to the site of the G8's 2003 summit on Lake Geneva at the same Hôtel Royal.<sup>2</sup>

French President Emmanuel Macron brought together Canada's Prime Minister, France's President, the Chancellor of Germany, the Prime Minister of Italy, the Prime Minister of Japan, the UK's Prime Minister, the US President, and a delegation representing the European Union.

However, the Évian summit took place at a profoundly different moment in international affairs from that of previous decades.

When the summit season of 2026 began, the international system was characterised by war and persistent conflict, rising levels of strategic competition, and growing doubts over the capacity of multilateral forums to generate collective action.

Russia's war against Ukraine, continuing unrest in the Middle East, disruptions to international trade flows, economic fragmentation, and the accelerating pace of technological change created strains on established global governance structures, as declining aid, differing national agendas, and competing national objectives complicated international efforts to address issues such as energy and digital governance.

To counter these challenges, the French presidency pursued a pragmatic strategy under the heading of "convergence". The central approach to the summit was an explicit effort to extend participation beyond the existing membership of the G7. France invited an array of middle and emerging powers, from India, Brazil, and Kenya to the Republic of Korea, to take part in preliminary deliberations, alongside strategic partners such as the UAE, Qatar, Egypt, and Ukraine.

These steps reflected an understanding that the global balance of power is becoming more dispersed and that influence may increasingly be exercised through partnerships extending beyond traditional Western-led coordination formats.

Ultimately, Évian 2026 was a more political, more pragmatic, and more flexible forum. This could be observed across numerous aspects of the G7's deliberations and policy initiatives: bilateral contacts, symbolic political gestures, and working sessions in smaller and more informal formats complemented formal negotiations and communiqués rather than relying on sweeping rhetoric.<sup>3</sup>

Especially in light of a second Trump presidency taking shape in the United States, changing transatlantic relations, and increasingly complex bilateral partnerships, a new form of geopolitics may be emerging — one in which the G7 acts as a nexus that enables partnerships and flexible coalition-building to address global governance challenges.

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1. G7: Priorities for the Évian Summit | (2026, June 15). France in the U.S. <https://us.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/g7-priorities-evian-summit>

2. G8 summit in Evian, June 2003 | Gallery | guardian.co.uk. (2003, June 2). The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/gall/0,,968892,00.html>

3. France in the U.S. (2026, June 17). G7 summit in Évian: Day two. <https://us.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/sommet-du-g7-devian-deuxieme-jour>

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## II. AI AND THE PARTICIPATION OF AI CEOS: A NEW SEAT AT THE TABLE

A highlight of the 2026 Évian G7 Summit was the high-profile incorporation of leaders from frontier AI companies into high-stakes policy meetings. The event clearly expanded the community that is seen as central to governing the global order. Frontier AI companies were not considered external to state decision-making processes or positioned as supplemental technical advisors. Instead, major AI companies participated in high-level talks as quasi-diplomatic players, almost on a level with national leaders.

The working lunch, “Ensuring Safe, Rapid, and Efficient AI Adoption” — a working lunch on 17 June — brought together around a dozen top executives from the world’s leading AI firms.<sup>4</sup> Key participants included Sam Altman of OpenAI, Dario Amodei of Anthropic, Demis Hassabis of Google DeepMind, Arthur Mensch of Mistral AI, Alexandr Wang of Meta, Marc Benioff of Salesforce, Aidan Gomez of Cohere, Robin Rombach of Black Forest Labs, Pratyush Kumar of Sarvam AI, Victor Riparbelli of Synthesia, and Ren Ito of Sakana AI.<sup>5</sup> This cohort reflected the geographical and market concentration of frontier AI capabilities as well as increased awareness that technological dominance is inherently linked to political influence.

Among policy priorities, discussions gravitated towards how to safely and rapidly manage the development and application of AI, international coordination around AI governance, cybersecurity risks and protection, workforce displacement as a consequence of automation, and safeguarding children online. Expanding on previous work by the G7 Digital Ministers, leaders and executives committed to a stronger collective approach to protecting minors and advancing their interests online. This includes implementing safety-by-design, ensuring appropriate AI usage for the age of the user, coordinating measures against child sexual abuse generated by AI, and, importantly, stepping away from isolated national regulations toward a harmonised, interoperable policy framework among advanced economies.<sup>6</sup>

But beyond specific policy outcomes, the Évian summit sent a powerful message regarding the changing dynamics of power. As seen in the physical arrangement and format, the meeting itself indicated a shifting paradigm for what is understood to be relevant to international deliberation and state power. AI executives were seamlessly embedded within official summit discussions instead of remaining isolated within auxiliary events or trade forums. This reflected the growing acknowledgement that powerful private-sector actors are now the custodians and designers of capabilities with strategically crucial potential — similar to those historically held by states, such as control over critical infrastructure, leverage over information networks and narratives, and command over future defence technologies and economic growth drivers.

Beyond the substance, different visions for managing AI’s emerging impact were on display. Dario Amodei of Anthropic and Demis Hassabis of Google DeepMind are said to have championed increased coordination among democratic allies, facilitated access to the most advanced AI capabilities, and tighter export controls on sensitive technology for China.

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4. G7 Evian Summit Working Lunch on “Ensuring Safe, Rapid, and Efficient AI Adoption.” (2026, June 26). Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/ecm/epc/pageite\\_000001\\_00004.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/ecm/epc/pageite_000001_00004.html)

5. Rose, M. (2026, June 12). Tech executives to attend G7 summit as leaders address AI, online safety. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/tech-executives-attend-g7-summit-leaders-address-ai-online-safety-2026-06-12/>

6. Élysée. (2026, June 17). Leaders’ call on a safer digital space for minors. elysee.fr. <https://www.elysee.fr/en/G7evian/2026/06/17/leaders-call-on-a-safer-digital-space-for-minors>

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Their approaches conceptualise AI policy through the framework of security and alliance management.<sup>7</sup>

Sam Altman of OpenAI proposed what many considered a more open global approach, focusing on technical standards, testing regimes, and more expansive, multi-stakeholder governance architectures.<sup>8</sup>

European representatives, such as those from France, put a higher priority on issues of technological sovereignty, trustworthy access for allies to advanced technologies, and avoiding dependence on technology providers.<sup>9</sup>

Évian highlighted that AI had fundamentally transitioned from a purely technological policy issue or innovation agenda to an increasingly central realm of international politics and the exercise of power. The G7 showed it was open to experimenting with a novel format where private tech companies were integrated into the core workings of a major political and economic forum. While no formal institutional arrangements were created, the meeting established an important precedent. The debate over artificial intelligence is no longer about whether private actors' technologies and enterprises will influence global affairs, but now about the contours of that influence — under what conditions, with which partners, and which actors ultimately hold sway.

### **III. THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ AND THE VERSAILLES MOU: PRAGMATIC DIPLOMACY BEYOND THE SUMMIT TABLE**

Although the formal discussions at the G7 summit reiterated promises of energy security, maritime security, and regional de-escalation, the single most far-reaching aspect of the meeting occurred entirely separately from the formal negotiations. G7 Leaders had expressed support for restoring freedom of navigation in the Gulf, backed Franco-British proposals for enhancing naval protection systems, and re-emphasised the necessity of diversifying energy routes and minimizing dependency on strategically vulnerable choke points.<sup>10</sup> The more decisive geopolitical event, however, transpired after the G7 meeting had officially ended.

On the evening of June 17, Donald Trump and Iranian officials signed a US–Iran Memorandum of Understanding during the state banquet hosted by President Macron at Versailles.<sup>11</sup>

The memorandum, although predominantly negotiated outside the formal G7 deliberations, was rapidly transformed into the most public outcome of the meeting. The MoU contained an ambitious vision for regional normalisation and stability. The central elements of the Memorandum included: an immediate and universal de-escalation of conflict across active

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7. Nicol-Schwarz, K. (2026b, June 17). CEOs of Anthropic and Google DeepMind call for U.S.-led AI coalition in meeting at G7. CNBC. <https://www.cnb.com/2026/06/17/anthropic-amodei-google-hassabis-us-ai-coalition-g7.html>

8. Nicol-Schwarz, K. (2026b, June 17). CEOs of Anthropic and Google DeepMind call for U.S.-led AI coalition in meeting at G7. CNBC. <https://www.cnb.com/2026/06/17/anthropic-amodei-google-hassabis-us-ai-coalition-g7.html>

9. CityNews Halifax, Leicester, J., & Chan, K. (2026, June 17). French president urges US to share cutting-edge AI and democracies to cooperate on regulation. CityNews Halifax. <https://halifax.citynews.ca/2026/06/17/ai-executives-gather-at-g7-as-europeans-seek-checks-on-american-dominance/>

10. Élysée. (2026a, June 17). G7 leaders' statement on geopolitical issues. elysee.fr. <https://www.elysee.fr/en/G7evian/2026/06/17/g7-leaders-statement-on-geopolitical-issues>

11. CNN. (2026, June 18). June 17, 2026 - Trump signs US-Iran agreement. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2026/06/17/world/live-news/iran-war-g7-summit>

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combat zones – including the Lebanese front; the immediate resumption of commercial activity throughout the Strait of Hormuz; the phased removal of sanctions and maritime restrictions; the release of Iranian financial assets; and a proposed USD 300 billion recovery package.<sup>12</sup> These initiatives, taken collectively, would serve to defuse tensions and create a framework for normalisation and reintegration into the global economy.

The G7 Member States broadly welcomed the signing and expressed a willingness to facilitate its implementation in areas where they could make a meaningful contribution – such as support for maritime security, economic stability, and confidence-building measures within the region.<sup>13</sup>

However, beyond the content of the document itself, there was considerable symbolic significance. The Versailles episode highlights a trend within modern summits: major geopolitical breakthroughs seldom emerge from comprehensive consensus statements or high-level multilateral meetings. Rather, such developments can more frequently result from targeted bilateral negotiations taking place on the margins of these global meetings.

Évian thus serves as an illustration of this burgeoning “dual-track” diplomacy, whereby the multilateral structure provides political legitimacy, networking capabilities, and strategic messaging to key stakeholders – while significant negotiation takes place independently among these stakeholders through separate, flexible mechanisms.

It was a potent visual juxtaposition: as leaders convened at the water’s edge on Lake Geneva to formulate collective responses to instability in global governance, the most tangible geopolitical shift of the week unfolded in grand style across a 17th-century battlefield through the mechanisms of great power politics.

It represents an ever more pervasive reality: in the context of strategic fragmentation, the diplomatic arena increasingly favours concrete, and sometimes unconventional, “deal-making” over broad-brush multilateral approaches to complex problems.

## **IV. THE RISING ROLE OF MIDDLE POWERS: BROADENING THE CIRCLE**

The most notable characteristic of France’s 2026 G7 Presidency was its deliberate effort to broaden participation and shift middle and emerging powers from ad hoc guests to full-fledged stakeholders in agenda-setting and policy coordination. Instead of being restricted to purely symbolic outreach activities, France integrated certain partners into the preparatory Sherpa processes and substantive summit dialogues – signalling an evolving notion of how influence is exercised in an increasingly multipolar world.

In practical terms, the French presidency invited five strategic partners to engage throughout the summit cycle – Brazil, Egypt, India, Kenya, and the Republic of Korea.<sup>14</sup>

Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Ukraine were engaged as outreach partners.<sup>15</sup>

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12. US releases official agreement with Iran. Read the 14-point text. (2026, June 17). CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2026/06/17/middleeast/us-iran-war-mou-text-intl>

13. Élysée. (2026a, June 17). G7 leaders’ statement on geopolitical issues. elysee.fr. <https://www.elysee.fr/en/G7evian/2026/06/17/g7-leaders-statement-on-geopolitical-issues>

14. G7: Priorities for the Évian Summit |. (2026, June 15). France in the U.S. <https://us.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/g7-priorities-evian-summit>

15. European Council. (n.d.). G7 summit, Evian, France, 15-17 June 2026. Retrieved June 24, 2026, from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2026/06/15-17/>

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In terms of heads of state or government, Narendra Modi, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, William Ruto, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, and Lee Jae-myung attended dedicated outreach sessions and engaged in certain plenary exchanges.

Critically, their participation went far beyond that of a merely symbolic delegation, involving substantive contributions across multiple G7 topics: middle powers made contributions to G7 discussions on issues such as economic fragmentation, the diversification of supply chains, critical mineral supply-chain resilience, digital governance, industrial competitiveness, and development finance.<sup>16 17</sup>

In addition to individual policy contributions, Évian also highlighted an underlying structural shift that makes it necessary for middle powers to be more prominently included in international cooperation frameworks: the increased strategic relevance of these states for global governance.

Neither “great powers” nor “small states,” middle powers’ increased influence is less related to military capabilities than to their ability to mediate between diverse agendas, connect North–South policy priorities, facilitate compromise, build effective coalitions, and bridge ideological divides and complex geopolitics.

For the G7, this development poses an important challenge and a distinct opportunity: in practical terms, it opens possibilities to extend the impact of G7 initiatives globally; on the political front, it reinforces its legitimacy.

This can and should be done by expanding the circle beyond purely the group of rich, technologically advanced states, as it would be a clear sign of recognition of these states’ contributions towards solving a broad range of global issues, from supply chain disruptions and critical mineral insecurity to setting standards for digital governance and promoting a stable international economy that may well come about not through narrowly confined institutional clubs but via partnerships between networks of like-minded, capable partners.

In that sense, Évian 2026 is not an outlier event or a gesture of a merely temporary outreach effort to expand the G7’s horizons; rather, it signifies the emergence of a G7 of “flexible geometry”: a club still limited in membership, yet expanded in reach and in the mechanisms used to conduct policy in a multipolar world.

## **V. TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS: ADAPTATION UNDER CONSTRAINT**

Transatlantic relations remained the backdrop to the Évian Summit, even though they received less attention than other issues. Évian thus highlighted the enduring Western coalition as well as the more complex context of managing transatlantic alliances, particularly in the second Trump term. Rather than breaking apart, Évian suggested that cooperation became more focused and based more on concrete strategic interests than shared values.

The tone and focus of Évian were heavily marked by President Trump’s return to an “America First” agenda, with climate policy addressed as a more minor issue that resulted in few, if any, concrete initiatives. Trade policy ambitions gave way to more specific questions related

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16. Élysée. (2026c, June 17). The outcomes of the Évian G7 Summit. [elysee.fr. https://www.elysee.fr/en/G7evian/2026/06/17/the-outcomes-of-the-evian-g7-summit](https://www.elysee.fr/en/G7evian/2026/06/17/the-outcomes-of-the-evian-g7-summit)

17. European Council. (n.d.-b). G7 summit, Evian, France, 15-17 June 2026. Retrieved June 24, 2026, from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2026/06/15-17/>

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to competitiveness, supply-chain security, and direct economic ties between major powers. In summary, the Évian Summit seemed designed to lead to achievable outcomes through more restricted forms of cooperation rather than comprehensive multilateral declarations.

These limitations notwithstanding, important coordination among transatlantic allies did take place. Leaders were reunited in support of efforts to shore up air defences and provide longer-term security assistance to Ukraine. G7 partners also found themselves largely supportive of initiatives to enhance maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz, welcomed recent diplomatic de-escalation of tensions in the region, and endorsed Washington's deal with Iran (via a Memorandum of Understanding). The agreement itself seemed to prove that bilateral diplomacy and transatlantic alliance cooperation can coexist: Washington acted as the main actor in negotiations, while France, for its part, helped by providing political support, diplomatic backing, and strategic accommodation to a deal which would otherwise have become very complicated to broker.

This pragmatic vision served to illustrate what has become one of the central principles governing current transatlantic relations: when it comes to asserting influence, leading states of the Alliance prefer the use of differentiated responsibility to formal institutional unity. Washington did indeed manage to bring decisiveness to the table on high-stakes diplomatic and military questions, while its European allies provided a convening function and enabled a new alliance consensus on such matters. Paris also provided diplomatic space for this arrangement, in the hope of giving it political legitimacy. Macron did not hesitate, for instance, to reshuffle his schedule as well as the diplomatic proceedings of the Summit to allow Washington's inclusion.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, the Évian Summit illustrated one of the structural weaknesses of the G7 approach, whereby when the biggest successes stem primarily from bilateral engagements – such as the aforementioned Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Iran – the Summit risks becoming less of a body that makes decisions and more of a body that rubber-stamps them so as to boost momentum behind initiatives launched at other levels. This is not to say that the G7 lost relevance, but rather that it changed its function, shifting from an organisation shaping outcomes to one reinforcing them by coordinating around common efforts and consensus reached elsewhere.

France, as host of Évian 2026, adapted accordingly by leaning heavily on personal contacts and sophisticated political signalling, as well as a heavy dosage of formalistic and symbolic diplomacy, where institutionalized mechanisms did not always deliver. At times, the summit reflected a broader truth about the transatlantic partnership: as long as respective economic interests are aligned, coordination on issues and management of differences – often through compromise – remain possible in pursuit of broader alliance security objectives.

The summit reflected an adaptive mode of transatlantic alliance politics, in which pragmatism and efficiency have gained over grandeur. Rather than a decline in transatlantic cooperation, it was a transformation that was evident at the Évian Summit, marking a continuation of existing trends in alliance politics under the second term of Donald Trump.

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18. Wintour, P. (2026, June 15). Macron frames Évian G7 agenda in hope Trump will stay for whole summit. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/jun/15/macron-evian-g7-agenda-summit-trump>

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## VI. OTHER NOTABLE OUTCOMES: DELIVERING THROUGH SELECTIVE COOPERATION

In addition to the headline themes of AI governance, middle-power engagement, and regional diplomacy, the 2026 Évian Summit produced a variety of concrete outcomes that confirmed the G7's enduring capacity for crisis response alongside adaptation to emerging strategic priorities. Collectively, the Évian outcomes represented an evolution towards selective cooperation centred on implementation, resilience, and targeted coalition-building.

### Strengthened Commitment to Ukraine

Russia's war against Ukraine continued to be a central issue of unity for the G7 leaders, who welcomed the personal participation of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and confirmed further commitments to strengthening his country's military and economic resilience, as well as additional support for air defence and longer-range strike capabilities.

Russia also continued to face G7 pressure to end its war, with new sanctions targeting the country's "shadow fleet" oil exports and other activities used to circumvent previous measures.<sup>19 20</sup>

Nevertheless, while Évian leaders noted the possibility of continued diplomatic engagement with Russia on specific issues where feasible, the narrative around Russia's actions remained consistent — an ongoing threat to European and international security. Thus, Ukraine remained the ultimate pillar of transatlantic cohesion regardless of the other challenges the G7 members faced.

### Economic Resilience and Global Economic Imbalances

Discussions on economic matters revolved around enhancing resilience within an increasingly fragmented and complex global economic environment and, at least in the leaders' discourse, eschewed further global trade liberalization. There were specific expressions of concern about Russia's and China's large-scale industrial capacity, industrial subsidies, and other measures linked to non-market economic practices that distort global competition and threaten equitable opportunities for G7 members.

As an antidote, G7 leaders commissioned institutions such as the OECD and the IMF to play enhanced roles in monitoring subsidy schemes and structural distortions.<sup>21</sup>

Instead of seeking an updated international trade framework, the approach taken at Évian signalled a somewhat defensive economic strategy aimed at maintaining a competitive and resilient position within the existing economic order and mitigating supply-chain risks.

### Critical Minerals: From Concern to Industrial Cooperation

Perhaps one of the most concrete "institutional" deliverables from Évian was the announcement of the "Critical Minerals Resilience and Production Alliance," an initiative to coordinate the

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19. Élysée. (2026b, June 17). G7 leaders' statement on geopolitical issues. [elysee.fr. https://www.elysee.fr/en/G7evian/2026/06/17/g7-leaders-statement-on-geopolitical-issues](https://www.elysee.fr/en/G7evian/2026/06/17/g7-leaders-statement-on-geopolitical-issues)

20. PBS News. (2026, June 16). Trump signals he may reimpose sanctions on Russian oil as G7 refocuses on Ukraine. [pbs.org. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/trump-signals-he-may-reimpose-sanctions-on-russian-oil-as-g7-refocuses-on-ukraine](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/trump-signals-he-may-reimpose-sanctions-on-russian-oil-as-g7-refocuses-on-ukraine)

21. G7: Contents of the Leaders' Declaration at Evian. (2026, June 17). NOVA.news. <https://www.agenzianova.com/en/news/g7-i-contenuti-della-dichiarazione-dei-leader-riuniti-a-evian/>

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diversification of critical mineral supply chains, the development of improved traceability standards for critical minerals, the scaling of recycling capacity for relevant materials, and, at an ambitious level, the stimulation of industrial investment in G7 and partner countries and beyond.

The alliance aims, by 2030, to significantly reduce reliance on individual concentrated suppliers of certain key materials in order to secure supply chains critical to clean technology manufacturing, industrial production, defence systems, and digital infrastructure, and will include G7 members, several selected middle powers, and the private sector, mirroring Évian's overarching coalition-based format.<sup>22</sup>

## Health Security and Other Transnational Threats

Other security themes also featured prominently. Health security took on renewed importance with the strengthening of joint efforts in the fight against cancer and a renewed commitment to addressing existing outbreaks. Cancer research, detection, and access to treatment will be key focus areas.<sup>23</sup>

Leaders also launched an emergency response plan for the Bundibugyo region Ebola outbreak, again underlining global connectivity when it comes to health resilience.<sup>24</sup>

In other areas, leaders reiterated commitments to strengthening coordination against migrant smugglers and illicit trafficking operations. They adopted enhanced measures for online child protection and will also continue efforts to counter the malicious uses of artificial intelligence, in particular by enhancing efforts against online child abuse material generated by AI.

## Climate Policy: Continuity Without New Goals

For the climate policy community, the main takeaway from Évian would have been the lack of emphasis on and expansion of this policy arena. G7 leaders recommitted themselves to climate-resilient infrastructure and green transitions, but no major new financial commitments were announced, no specific targets were added, and climate change received lower priority compared to other issues.

Instead, a noticeable trend emerged towards integrating energy concerns with strategic stability objectives, particularly in view of mounting tensions around transit and delivery through the Strait of Hormuz.

## VII. BROADER IMPLICATIONS AND REFLECTIONS: TOWARD A MORE FLEXIBLE G7

The G7 Évian 2026 Summit gave an invaluable preview of how the G7 is reorienting itself to an international arena that is more fractured, technologically dependent, and politicised than in previous decades. Long regarded as a relatively exclusive club of leading industrial

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22.Élysée. (2026b, June 17). G7 leaders' declaration on securing supply chains for critical minerals. elysee.fr. <https://www.elysee.fr/en/G7evian/2026/06/17/g7-leaders-declaration-on-securing-supply-chains-for-critical-minerals>

23. G7 Leaders' Joint Statements - Evian, France, 16-17 June 2026. (2026, June 17). European Council. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/06/17/g7-leaders-joint-statements-evian-france-16-17-june-2026/>

24.Élysée. (2026a, June 16). Leaders' call for a coordinated response to the Bundibugyo Ebola outbreak. elysee.fr. <https://www.elysee.fr/en/G7evian/2026/06/16/leaders-call-for-a-coordinated-response-to-the-bundibugyo-ebola-outbreak>

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states — where multilateralism and informal coordination played out alongside interstate rivalries — it is transforming into an increasingly adaptable, hybrid multilateral institution, combining formal intergovernmental diplomacy with the selective inclusion of non-state actors, middle powers, and issue-specific coalitions.

The Summit architecture, from the inclusion of frontier AI executives at the leader level directly in the conversation on AI regulation to the middle powers invited into preparatory and policy processes, signals not just symbolic inclusion.

These developments suggest an implicit understanding that the centres of power are becoming more distributed in world affairs: states remain centre stage, but are no longer alone on centre stage.

Technological capacity, market power, innovation ecosystems, and coalition-building capabilities — not only conventional state power — are increasingly defining outcomes.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

The 2026 summit was a clear signpost that adaptation — not extension — will become the defining strategy in the pursuit of relevance in a changing world. Instead of altering the fundamentals of the club, Évian showed how the G7 was adapting the way it operated in a fragmented international environment defined by technological disruption, a diffusion of influence, and geopolitical discordance.

The conference helped maintain existing areas of G7 coordinated cooperation, reaffirming commitment to Ukraine and reinforcing efforts toward economic resilience and other key strategic areas.

More significantly, it embraced new trends: first, frontier AI executives participated more actively in leader-level discussions — acknowledging the fact that technology carries substantial geopolitical clout.

Second, it more actively engaged middle and developing powers to contribute to preparing outcomes that extended beyond the boundaries of G7 membership.

Most symbolically, the biggest breakthrough outside the G7's structured negotiations — the US–Iran MoU signed at Versailles — illustrates how diplomacy outside traditional multilateral approaches is gaining currency, and how traditional multilateral arrangements are being matched or outperformed by direct dialogue, the power of political imagery, and tailored diplomacy.

Évian also hinted at a move toward a more adaptable model of governance where formal institutions remain significant but are more often supplemented by ad hoc partnerships, coalitions of states, and engagement with non-state entities.

It suggests that the G7 has gradually but significantly transformed from a leadership group of developed countries into a forum where groups may more easily converge strategically and where governments, leading technologists, and influential partners are brought together.

Such an outcome does not negate long-term political difficulties regarding legitimacy and asymmetry in power distribution, but it reflects pragmatism aimed at effectiveness under altered conditions.

This trip from Lake Geneva to Versailles also indicates something deeper — a transition from fixed architecture towards flexible arrangements and from monolithic institutions

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towards flexible partnerships and deal-making — what one commentator called an age of “negotiated power.”

Évian 2026 did not build a new international order. It revealed the attempts by existing organisations to cope with one.

If this new trend continues, then the biggest success of the 2026 conference was the “quiet normalisation” of this new approach — a G7 which would increasingly serve as a platform for the coordination of states, technology firms, and ad hoc coalitions.

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