

CONCLUSION: THE WAITING AGENDA

Strategy has many definitions, but the most useful for policymakers is the notion that strategy is the result of sets of decisions joining ends to means taken by people with the authority to decide and to oversee the implementation of those decisions. Although foreign policy is the province of the minister of foreign affairs, that policy is in fact dependent in many cases on resources that belong to others. Designing a Canadian foreign policy strategy which has at its centre the idea of achieving Canadian goals through coalitions must necessarily involve people of authority from other departments and agencies of the Canadian government led by politicians. **If ministers directed officials, military officers, and other authorities to bring forward a national strategy aimed at advancing Canadian interests through coalitions, then what issues would be placed on the agenda before an interdepartmental forum?**

The National Interest Doubtless, the primary matter would be to discover what "national interests" could be and should be advanced in coalitions. Because coalition dynamics invariably require compromises, it would seem that coalition politics ought to be restricted to those things that Canada cannot achieve on its own. However, coalition politics might also be used as an avenue along which Canada could and should involve itself in the affairs of others and of the world community in general. For instance, Canada might not always have access to negotiations between the United States and Latin American states, but by maintaining a connection to the United States and Latin American states through the Western Hemispheric coalition, the Organization of American States, does give Canadian policymakers access to aspects of these important relationships by right of association. The basic question for the strategic forum is, however, what is the connection between Canada's strategic imperatives and its strategic choices and with each coalition, old and new?

Why, Where, and with Whom Quite naturally, the second item on the agenda should bring forward a discussion of the national parameters that would guide a Canadian coalition strategy. In other words, as discussed in this essay, why would Canada decide to join or to maintain a particular coalition? Where in the world can Canada best achieve its purposes most efficiently and with whom would Canada seek and accept alliance? This is not an easy policy framework to design and build. But if there are no boundaries to where, when, and with whom Canada will act, then there can be no way to understand or to limit demands for resources from departments or to place reasonable conditions on Canadian expectations in matters of international affairs.

The Canadian Rules Canada cannot join other states nor take on obligations that flow from coalitions without regard for national laws, costs, domestic politics and policies, and the need to maintain public support for foreign policy. It is critically important, therefore, that policy planners and individuals who lead Canadians in coalition operations have at hand a basic national regime for coalitions – Canadian rules of the game – to guide their actions and decisions. The next question on the agenda for Canadian leaders is this: What are the explicit terms under which Canada will join and support coalitions in international affairs?

The National Mechanism for Coalition Plans and Operations A single meeting or even several routine meetings of officials will never satisfy the need for Canada to continuously anticipate, plan for, and manage coalition politics in Canada's interests. Perhaps the most difficult coalition that