

Multilateralism, the Club Scene or Entrepreneurial Activism? Choices in an Age of Change

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The contemporary discussion of the international institutional system engages, explicitly or implicitly, a range of extraordinarily broad themes. First, there are varying levels of dissatisfaction with the multilateral economic institutions conceived at Bretton Woods against a background of deep concern over the viability of the mother ship itself, the United Nations. Second, there is a search for new, intermediate institutional structures such as the "G-somethings" (or, at the national leaders' level, the "L-something") to act as catalysts or brokers on issues stalled at the multilateral level. Third, there is a concern over the ways and means for continued bilateral collaboration between friendly nations based on shared values, interests and obligations in global affairs.

This discussion is taking place in a context that brings together the political with the economic and the security dimensions of international relations in today's world. I should therefore ask for the reader's indulgence: the remarks below are somewhat speculative and necessarily in a personal rather than governmental capacity. My main messages are as follows:

First, Canada, one of the most open of the G-7 countries, has an uncommonly deep interest in maintaining a well-functioning global trading system and stable currency frame-

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