

20. Such observations point to a central difficulty about evaluating foreign policy, at least by quantitative techniques. It is true that the metaphor of the private sector is commonly applied to foreign policy: people speak of profit and loss, and of balance sheets, in judging the relative success or failure of the Government's foreign undertakings. But the metaphor is imperfect. In the nature of things, national interests in foreign policy have to be pursued in a foreign environment. At best this environment lies beyond the direct control of national governments; at worst, it is often hostile and unpredictable as well. Policy-makers do what they can to identify Canadian interests clearly, foresee the international context in which these interests will have to be pursued, and work to shape that context in a sense favourable to national interests. But for an indefinite future, the international system will remain based upon the sovereign state; and no country - not even the most powerful, let alone a country like Canada - can at all times be confident of its capacity to identify its interests abroad quickly and clearly, to predict how events will unfold, and to control these events in its own interest. On the contrary, many foreign policy decisions have to be taken on the basis of partial knowledge of a confused present and limited capacity to predict, let alone control, the future. When this happens, there is, as Mr. Jamieson says, no bottom line. Systems that fail to take this into account will themselves fail.

21. Not that national interests can never be identified, nor events foreseen and controlled. Possibilities vary with circumstances. The prompt, clear identification of national interest is an exercise of intellect, imagination, knowledge and judgement. To the extent Canadian policy-makers have these qualities, they will succeed in identifying national interests when it is humanly possible to do so. And while Canada is not the most powerful or influential country in the world, it is far from being the weakest or most disregarded. Canada has powerful assets. Shrewd exploitation of these assets in particular situations can alter such situations in Canada's interest.

22. Foreign policy from this point of view covers a broad spectrum of possibilities. At one extreme lie circumstances where the national interest is clear, Canada's bargaining position is strong, and the desired outcome foreseeable and attainable. In such circumstances, it is essentially a matter of competent management to fix objectives, develop programmes, marshal resources and measure progress towards the objectives sought. At the other extreme lie circumstances